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FRANCES.

VOL. I.

FRANCES.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

"In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite."

Shakespeare: SONNET XXXVI.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO

HARRY FROWDE.

Frances, dear Harry, is a name that we
Bank above common names ; for is not she
A perfect woman, if such thing there be ?
No problem puzzles her, no bore will vex,
Calmly she takes the troubles of the sex,
Each man she meets is tried by touchstone true,
So who can wonder she's in love with you ?

FRANCES.

CHAPTER I.

BY THE AVON.

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou must die."

IF, on a beautiful green lawn, by the side of a soft clear river, you came suddenly upon proof of a violent struggle, probably ending in death—the grass trodden into mud, fragments of a black velvet coat upon the ground, marks of blood here and there, a gold watch, with half a chain, smashed at

the foot of a tree, a letter or two lying about, the broken barrel of a pistol with some hair upon it, the idea at once flashing on your mind would be MURDER.

This was the idea which flashed with terrible suddenness on the mind of a beautiful girl who on a fair September morning walked down to the river flowing through her brother's land. On just such a scene came Frances Carey, who loved a walk before breakfast in the September mornings, when the air is cool and the shadows are long. This morning she had been a little later than usual, for while she dressed she had been lost in thought. She had been much annoyed the night before: and the last scene of the evening comes back with the morning hours. When her eye caught the time from her watch on the dressing-table, she determined to have a run before Walter's punctual appetite required her

presence. Shaking off her annoyance, she tripped out upon the lawn, looking as fresh as dew-sprinkled Dawn herself. How calm and bright and pure and sweet the air! It was indeed "the bridal of the earth and sky." Could there be any evil in so beautiful a world? Her dogs barked round her: the knowing old tame jackdaw, who came to the window for bits of bread at breakfast-time, croaked his welcome, with his cunning head all on one side; her pigeons fluttered down to greet her, knowing the time of peas and hemp was come. She had just a minute to run down to her favourite spot by the river, and pay the Avon her morning visit. There she stood appalled. She did not faint, having a fine reserve of strength: but she shuddered when she saw that the fragments of black velvet were like those which Stephen Heath wore the night before, when he supped at her brother's house; and

she shuddered still more when she saw the shattered watch at the foot of a great ash-tree.

It was Stephen's watch, which he had looked at the night before in her presence. And Stephen Heath and Hugh Roland had fiercely quarrelled at Carey Farm late last night. And now murder had been done.

She stood for some time in the midst of this horror, scarcely knowing what to think, or whether she thought at all. Could Hugh be a murderer? Impossible. Yet Stephen might have provoked him to sudden violence: for all the parish knew that Stephen could sneer and that Hugh could strike. And they were so angry the night before.

Poor Frances! Her brain throbbed with intense pain. These two men quarrelled about her only: and she would be glad to see neither of them ever again, though she

admitted to herself a slight, very slight, preference of one over the other.

She stood as if turned to stone. She might have fainted or fallen in a fit but for the voice of her brother Walter cheerily crying,

“Now, Frances ! Where are you, water-sprite ? Eggs and bacon and coffee ! Come along, you little lover of sentiment.”

“*O Walter !*” she shrieked, in a tone like that of Ireland’s banshee.

He ran headlong down to the point whence her voice issued. He put his strong brotherly arm around her waist, and she gave way at once, and burst into a flood of tears that relieved her brain. Walter Carey’s first thought had been for his sister : when he looked at the scene that had caused her terrible fear, he was no less troubled than she. He, like his sister, recognised relics of Stephen Heath.

Both Stephen Heath and Hugh Roland were coyly, in country fashion, wooing Frances Carey. Her brother Walter preferred Heath: it is rather thought that Frances preferred Roland. Hence the conclusions formed in the minds of the brother and sister, though they loved each other intensely, were likely in some degree to differ.

Walter Carey took his sister home, and made her go to bed, with an old servant attending. She was delirious for awhile . . . and no wonder, poor child! Walter, also, felt rather dazed; but he rode over himself, saying no word to anyone else, to the police-station at Chessington, and gave the requisite information. Then he returned to look after his sister.

CHAPTER II.

THE AVONSIDE MURDER.

"Strange that bad deeds are often done where quietude
 Has brooded like the halcyon o'er the hyaline :
 That lawns to lovers dear are trod by murderers !"

The Comedy of Dreams.

A VONSIDE is commonly the quietest of villages, and was suddenly dragged into a dreadful publicity by the murder of Stephen Heath. It is a lovely tranquil corner of the world, where tragedies ought never to occur. Most of the land belongs to Walter Carey, whose father, a distinguished London surgeon, unequalled for cutting from the human frame all deformities,

retired early to a rustic life, bought land, and turned farmer. He left his land to his son Walter, with a charge upon it for Frances; and Walter, who has determined never to marry, wishes only that Frances would determine likewise, so that they might live happily together, old bachelor and old maid. Walter likes hunting, shooting, fishing; he likes reading, having had a good Oxford education; he likes to smoke over Horace and a glass of strong home-brewed ale. He naturally rather dislikes his sister's two lovers.

Stephen Heath is—or *was*—the son of one Captain Heath (the Honourable Captain Heath, I think), who took a house in Avonside some years ago. The house in question was a cottage, but has, by successive additions, developed into a villa. The Captain is a little man of sixty, who does not look quite forty; he knows all the arts

of the world, he can make his sixty years into forty, and his three hundred a year as good as a thousand. He is infinitely bored at Avonside, but he dare not live in the neighbourhood of any large town for fear of his son, who, though the most plausible of young gentlemen in polite society, and greatly approved by the Rector of Avonside, is unfortunately a bad arithmetician, and for that reason cannot always balance with strict accuracy income and expenditure. Heath pooh-poohs his son, and dismisses the younger generation with a contemptuous wave of the hand; swears at the innovations of Whig statesmen just as he swears at his wine-merchant for sending in a bill. But Captain Heath is a good Tory and a good churchman, and goes regularly to church, and never swears on Sundays.

Hugh Roland, who has that most unfortunate possession for a young man, a small

independence, lives with his aunt, in a house that lies higher up the Avon—a snug old-fashioned comfortable house, that has been in the Hutchison family for centuries, and, strongly built at first, shows no symptoms of decay. The old lady, Miss Hutchison, his mother's sister, is very fond of her nephew, but can't understand him. She is a Puritan ; he is a Pythagorean. She likes perfect regularity ; he likes perfect irregularity. She wisely wants him to adopt a career ; he unwisely wants some sublime career to adopt him. He has already run into small eccentricities. He goes away now and then with a party of gipsies—he tells his aunt he is off for a walk, and she needn't keep dinner for him . . . and he returns after a few weeks, having walked to the other end of England. He tries to blow up the place with his chemical experiments, and it is generally thought he is

finding the philosopher's stone. This makes the vulgar of Avonside respectful to him : the man who is finding out the way to make gold deserves worship. Is it not the highest object to which man can attain ?

I should like to be able to describe Frances Carey. While Walter was away at a public school and Oxford, her father delighted to teach her at home. So she knows a lot of things other girls don't know, and is ignorant of an infinite number of things absolutely requisite for the completion of a young lady's education. She knows her Shakespeare; she can read Chaucer; she can enjoy the Odyssey and the odes of Horace. But I fear she would break down in any competitive examination; and the public opinion of Avonside declares her an ignoramus. She can play neither croquet nor the guitar; but she can doctor all the poor people intelligently.

Frances Carey had a long dreamless sleep after her terrible adventure, and awoke with no distinct recollection of what had occurred, but with a weight upon her spirit. The old servant and housekeeper, Rachel Gray, had taken her in charge, and was by her bedside awaiting her awakening. Rachel was born in the family—her mother had been Mr. Carey's housekeeper after his wife died, having previously been many years in his service. She was a servant of the antique mould, loving her young master and mistress.

Frances sat up in her bed suddenly. The window opposite looked out on a mingled mass of green, for the lawn in front of the farmhouse was covered with trees of all kinds, and hedged in by lines of elm and lime. Never was Matthew Arnold's "bird-haunted English lawn" more perfectly verified: starling quaintly pecked there im-

paling wriggling worms, and the yellow-billed blackbird, followed by his spouse, hunted it on all but the sunniest days, and fought the thrush, more timorous, and water-wagtails crossed the green floor like ladies at a ball, and the troubadour redbreast fought and sang, and wrens fluttered shyly into the densest foliage, and in sharp Winters the grosbeak left his Norway pines, and brought up an English brood, and flew athwart the trees like a giant of the painted butterfly tribe.

The cool green of the well-known window unconsciously soothed the girl—she began to recall the past; she remembered what had frightened her. She put out her hand to Rachel, who took it in both her own, but said nothing. After awhile Frances said,

“He did not do it, Rachel—I am sure he did not.”

"He is very wild, miss, sometimes," said Rachel. "Don't you remember how he thrashed that tinker for throwing a stone at one of his dogs? And you know how he goes away sometimes, Miss Frances. Oh! I think he's rather a defiable young gentleman. But I don't think he'd do a fellow-creature no harm, unless he was greatly provoked; and you know that Mr. Stephen Heath, I don't like him a bit, he's main provoking; and you see, Mr. Hugh, he's got a ponderious fist."

"He never murdered Stephen Heath," said Frances, in a quiet voice, "whatever provocation he may have received. I know them both. He would hold Mr. Heath with one hand, and make him kneel to him. No; there is something mysterious in the affair. I will have a warm bath, and dress, Rachel."

The old servant, well accustomed to her mistress's resolute way, at once obeyed

orders. Frances Carey was downstairs soon after noon, putting household matters into their regular groove. That her brother had ridden right away to Chessington she had learnt from Rachel. She had luncheon ready for him on his return, with an inspector of police as his companion, and quite surprised Walter by her complete recovery from so severe a horror.

"You seem quite yourself again, Frances," he said, when they had a moment together, while the inspector devoted himself to bread and cheese, and homebrewed ale.

"O yes, dear Walter. I am well, after a quiet sleep. It was shocking at first. But now you will make these policemen do their work properly, won't you? I don't quite believe in policemen."

"I suppose they know their business," said Walter. "I will do my best. Hallo, who is knocking down the front door?"

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Hugh Roland rested his strong right hand on a corner of Carey's stout oak table, which quivered beneath him. He looked somewhat wildly at the three persons present.

"Is he dead?" he exclaimed. "Did I kill him? No, I could not have killed him with such an easy touch as that."

"He is my dear son's murderer, by God!" cried Captain Heath, in a rage, and he rushed forward and caught the young fellow by the collar. Hugh made no resistance, but sank into a chair, saying,

"No, Captain Heath. It is quite impossible. The slight blow I gave your son could not have killed him."

"Call the police," said the old soldier. "Take him in hand. He is the murderer!"

At this moment Miss Hutchison entered, her usually calm countenance clouded with unutterable pain. She came to the chair in which Hugh Roland sat, with the Captain

keeping vicious guard over him, and bent over her nephew, and kissed his brow, saying,

“You are no murderer, I am sure, Hugh.”

“No, Miss Hutchison, I am sure he is not !” cried Frances.

But Hugh said nothing. He gave a great sigh. Captain Heath eyed him as a dog eyes a cat, resolved to keep him well in sight. He need not have been so resolute ; Hugh Roland would not have stirred an inch ; there was that on his brain which kept him quiet.

“He never did it, dear Miss Hutchison,” said Frances. “He could not have done such a thing.”

The police, who are above or below sentiment, took him away to Chessington.

CHAPTER III.

ELLE ET LUI.

“No man is helpless if one woman pray for him.”

“NO,” thought Frances to herself, when all this was over—when Hugh was conveyed away in custody—when she had gone off early to bed, with for companion a terrible headache—that headache which threshes the brain with a flail, which pounds it with pestle in mortar, which hammers it on anvil—“no, Hugh never did it. There is something strange. O, I wish my poor head would not whirl and whirl! I wish I could think! Poor dear Hugh wants some-

body to think for him. He may have knocked Stephen down, for Stephen is a provoking fellow, but he never tore his coat to atoms, or smashed his watch."

Our little Frances, as is not seldom the way with women, found she loved Hugh a little bit, now he was in sore trouble and disgrace; and she got out of bed and knelt down and prayed for him, burying her face in the bed-clothes; and her prayer was:

"O dear Father in heaven, make the truth be known soon, and save Hugh from too long a trouble! For Christ's sake. Amen."

Over and over again she said this simple prayer, and then she got into the fragrant linen sheets, and fell fast asleep, and slept without a dream.

The novel which deals with human life on all sides has a right to deal with the power of prayer. Everything in the pres-

ent day is to be scientific, and some imbecile person proposed to test the efficacy of prayer by praying for the patients in one ward of a hospital, and leaving another ward unprayed-for, and comparing results. This blockhead looked on prayer as a mechanical matter, whereas it is the soul's cry to God in moments of imminent peril, it is the soul's converse with God in times of tranquil happiness. No true prayer was ever unanswered; no man ever asked for bread and received a stone.

Meanwhile, Hugh Roland is in the lock-up at Chessington, which means, however, that he is in the parlour of the superintendent of police, who doesn't believe in his criminality, though things look serious, and whose buxom wife is quite angry that such a nice young gentleman should be "took up." If Hugh could have eaten a mountain of muffins that night, and drunken an

eighteen-gallon cask of tea, the superintendent and his spouse would have been delighted. But he could not. Appetite had left him. He had a dreadful doubt in his mind, which appalled him.

The superintendent made him snug enough, locking him into a little clean bedroom with its window barred. On his dressing-table he found a kindly gift—a pint tankard with a cover—and it contained good ale. It was thoughtful.

“Anyway,” soliloquised Hugh, “this policeman does not think me a murderer. Who would show such kindness to a murderer? No, I can’t have murdered him.”

He emptied the tankard and jumped into bed, prayerless; but did not Frances pray for him? He was asleep in five minutes. He did not dream of the gibbet; a great trouble, like very hard work, is often, by nature’s motherly kindness, followed by

sound sweet sleep that knows no dreams.

When Hugh awoke in the morning he could not guess where he was. The room was comfortable enough, but he missed the sweet Avonside air, and his kind puritan aunt's dainty devices in bed-room cosiness. And then the remembrance of yesterday came, and for a moment stunned him. When he was calm enough to think, he went over and over again the events of the previous day, so far as he could recollect them. He had been with Frances Carey, the beautiful girl whom he loved better than life. He had met at Carey Farm his rival, the murdered man, a fellow whom he utterly despised. Heath had insulted him in Frances Carey's presence ; he had left her with a sense of burning shame that he should have used strong language in her gentle presence—the presence of a girl whose atmosphere of peace was as the fragrance of a flower.

Afterwards there had been a fierce quarrel, as he and Heath went homeward ; there had been a struggle ; he scarce remembered what had happened, so thoroughly was his always restless brain upset by this swift movement of events. One thought haunted him with such strong stay, that there seemed no room for any other—*Am I a murderer ?*

And yet another thought came upon him at intervals, as his mind grew more tranquil —arose before him a beautiful vision : a tall agile brown-haired girl with averted eyes. Ah, but how well he knew their colour !—a lustrous variable blue. What was Frances doing now ? Was she thinking of him ? Did she believe him a murderer ? More momentous to him than his own future fate seemed Frances Carey's judgment upon him. To be found guilty by the law seemed to

him a trifle light as morning gossamer; to be held guilty by Frances were worse than all the hells of Dante's dream.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING HER MAJESTY'S PLEASURE.

"Which is less tolerable, death, or death in life?
 There are who have no fear of worlds invisible,
 Who would delight in death if death gives liberty?"
The Comedy of Dreams.

CHESSINGTON Petty Sessions. Present, Sir Clifford Coyle, Baronet; the Rev. Jephson Thring; Lovel Ward, Esquire, M.P. The Baronet is a young gentleman, who would much rather not be J.P., but has been worried into it by his relations and advisers, who deem it a duty of his position. The clergyman is Rector of Chessington, and knows more Hebrew and less human

nature than any other man in the county. Lovel Ward is master of hounds, hunts five days a week, gives good dinners, and is the Tory member for a three-cornered county. Before this triumvirate our hapless friend Hugh Roland was brought.

Never had been seen so crowded a court in Chessington. In that peaceful part of England murders are rare. The report of so atrocious a case had brought together the population for miles round. They were in a state of intense excitement, and yelled at Roland as he was taken to the court-house, and would have finished him without trial but for the strong guard of constables. He, poor fellow, walked in a dream. When he stood before the magistrates, he seemed hardly to know who they were. He thought of Frances, wondering what she thought of him ; he thought of his past life as something that had gone away from him for ever ;

he did not even recognize angry Captain Heath, who wildly gesticulated, and gave the magistrates an immense deal of trouble.

The evidence was taken. Walter Carey bore witness to a quarrel at his house ; thought both young men were admirers of his sister Frances, but did not think his sister encouraged either. The police deposed to the shreds of a velvet coat (identified as Stephen Heath's), to letters addressed Stephen Heath, Esquire (chiefly "bills delivered"), to the broken pistol barrel with hair on it (which Captain Heath swore was his son's hair), to the crushed gold watch, which bore Stephen Heath's monogram.

"At what time did that watch stop, policeman?" asked the Rector.

"There wasn't no hands left, your worship," was the reply.

The Baronet and the Rector, after asking

a few more questions, were quite disposed to commit the prisoner, but Mr. Lovel Ward, M.F.H., was a wiser man, and after exchanging a word with the magistrates' clerk, remarked that however strong the circumstantial evidence might be, it was absurd to commit a man for trial without any corporal evidence that there had been a murder. Where was the *corpus delicti*? The disappointed audience began to think that Hugh Roland would escape, and were at once as intensely disgusted as the vulgar lovers of cruelty always are when balked of their prey. But this was not to be his fortune. Suddenly the door opened, and the indignant constabulary were powerless to prevent the hurried entrance of a huge red-headed lout, well known to them as the rascaliest poacher of the neighbourhood, who yelled out excitedly,

"I've vound him! I've a-vound poor

Muster Heath! He was drowned down by Stanks Farm."

There was a general excitement. This chuckle-headed poacher was half imbecile, and had the craft which accompanies imbecility. There was not a policeman or a gamekeeper in the neighbourhood whom he had not foiled in some way or other. Imbeciles of his class are closely allied to wild animals, in the acute development of their instincts; Johnny Henwood could catch a hare on her form, a hawk in its nest, a trout in the shallow. He was followed always by a lean sly lurcher, black and white, that seemed to understand every word his master spoke—ay, and every wink he gave. That dog, whose name was Sam, would sneak into henroosts at early morn and bring Johnny all the eggs he could find. Sam was as clever as he was ugly. He never lost a rabbit or a leveret. Old Vosper, the Chessington

butcher, who was as respectable and as stout as the big Devon oxen he loved to kill, declared that Sam stole his mutton-chops, snatching one up when his back was turned, and carrying it round the corner to Johnny Henwood, who cautiously waited for his dinner. There is reason to believe in the truth of this story, seeing that Johnny was often known to toast a chop or a kidney at the tap-room fire of the least reputable publichouse in Chessington, and that the landlord—a man of the Claimant's build—would sometimes share his meat, and supply him with beer to wash it down.

The magistrates directed the superintendent of police to see what the disturbance meant. It was found that Johnny Henwood had seen a body in the stank (a piece of water between two locks, which seems to take its name from its odour), just by Stanks Farm. The police were ordered

to investigate : the multitude of course followed. Sir Clifford and Mr. Ward walked up and down before the court-house, smoking ; while the Rev. Jephson Thring took a small volume from his pocket, and buried himself in abstruse study. He was scarcely aroused by the shouting of the excited crowd, who returned in convoy of the *corpus delicti*. He did, however, awaken to consciousness when a dripping corpse was brought into the court. But Hugh Roland did not seem to notice the arrival. To everybody this seemed a clear proof of his guilt.

The body had evidently been battered by rapid descent through the water : scarcely any clothing was left, and the features were not distinguishable. Yet Captain Heath, when he saw it from the river-bank, at once declared it was his son's corpse, and was with difficulty prevented from leaping into

the stream to take it out. His excitement was painful ; the magistrates pitied him too much to restrain him, while the whole crowd echoed his outcry for vengeance on Hugh Roland, the murderer.

Hugh Roland was fully committed for trial. Bail was not accepted. It mattered little to him—his intensely excitable temper had settled down into a dreamy dulness, only enlightened at rare intervals by beautiful memories of the past, by wild hopes for the future. The Assizes were held at the county town within a few weeks. The time intervening, spent in the county gaol, was to Hugh Roland an everlasting blank. At first he had gone over and over the past, conjuring up the last glimpse of Frances Carey's soft blue eyes, his last grasp of her hand, his last thought ere he left Carey Farm, that he should like to touch with his own those beautiful lips ; conjuring up also

Stephen Heath's look—the look of a fiend—as he fell before him by the river-side. But soon he sank into absolute apathy—not an idea remained to him. The impression made upon the warders of the prison was that he was a lunatic. And when the supreme day arrived, and he stood in the dock before the Lord Chief Justice of England, he was in so utterly perplexed a condition that to both judge and jury he seemed devoid of sanity.

Poor Hugh Roland was defended by Mr. Quinkle, Q.C. That gentleman is thought to be the cleverest dealer with a difficult case that ever wore silk gown. His first glance at his brief showed him that it was vain to fight against the evidence. The police and the public had made up their minds that Hugh Roland had murdered Stephen Heath, and of course the jury would follow suit. Captain Heath identified his son's body.

From the prisoner himself nothing intelligible could be obtained. Mr. Quinkle rested his whole case on the theory that Hugh Roland had always been noted for an eccentricity that verged on lunacy, and the jury, accepting this theory, acquitted him ; and the Lord Chief Justice ordered that he should be kept in confinement during Her Majesty's pleasure.

Thus passes, from the pleasant sunshine on the green fields, into the society of maniacs, our poor friend Hugh Roland.

Captain Heath erected, over the body found by Johnny Henwood, a monument of white marble, in the churchyard of Avon-side. As time passed on, only the one or two people who knew Hugh Roland too well to think it possible he should be a murderer, made any question as to the truth of the inscription on that white marble slab. Captain Heath's strong belief had its in-

fluence on almost everybody, except Miss Hutchison and Frances Carey, and the verdict of society accorded with the tombstone :

HERE LIES
STEPHEN HEATH,
MURDERED,
Etc., etc.

CHAPTER V.

FRANCES.

My feeble muse, that fain her best wou'd
 Write at command of Frances Westwood,
 But feels her wits not in their best mood,
 Fell lately on some idle fancies,
 As she's much given to romances,
 About this self-same style of Frances ;
 Which seems to be a name in common
 Attributed to man or woman.
 She thence contrived this flattering moral,
 With which she hopes no soul will quarrel,
 That She who this twin title decks,
 Combines what's good in either sex ;
 Unites—how very rare the case is !—
 Masculine sense to female graces ;
 And quitting not her proper rank,
 Is both in one—*Fanny* and *Frank* !

CHARLES LAMB.

WALTER CAREY firmly believed that
 Roland was a murderer, and did by

no means believe that he was mad. "The fellow is feigning madness," was his thought all through. He was too kind to say this to his sister, whom he loved in his lazy half-selfish way; and being, like his favourite writer, *Epicuri de grege porcus*, he felt rather pleased than otherwise that his sister's two lovers were out of the way—one in an asylum, the other washed into the Severn Sea. It was a good riddance, in his estimation. Now Frances would not be gallivanting about, and thinking of marrying; and what in the world should he do without her? As Walter Carey smoked his evening pipe over his evening "twist," he felt perfectly satisfied.

Nothing is more curious in the history of generation than the way in which sex sometimes divides families. In the higher *gentes* children are few, and intellectual power is equally divided. In the lower, children

are many, and there is no intellectual power at all. There is an intermediate rank, wherein we find the sons clever and the daughters stupid, or the sons stupid and the daughters clever. I do not of course refer to the mere social standing of the moment, but to the imperishable divisions of race. When Lavengro met Isopel Berners in the dingle, she told him that the only three noble names in the county were to be found in the workhouse of Long Melford. Great races of men too often decay because they are not prolific. It is perhaps the middle class of men who achieve most material success and common comfort. Expect not from them high heroic deeds ; these belong to the higher blood ; but they will build colossal fortunes on foundations shifty as the quicksand.

Walter Carey was an easy egotist, kind when kindness cost nothing, but with a very

definite idea of self as centre of the moral and physical universe. He farmed his estate cleverly, rode well to hounds, enjoyed a good dinner, and was a welcome guest at all the neighbouring houses. A certain tacit complacency came over him when he found that both Frances's troublesome wooers were comfortably out of the way. His tobacco had a racier flavour, apparently—his ale a richer aroma of the hop—his Horace a gayer meaning. As he sat in the oak-wainscoted parlour at breakfast there was a pleased expression on his wind-freshened face; he ate his creamy eggs and crisp rashers with better appetite than ever; and, when he rode over his farms and looked after his men, he burst now and then into a soliloquy, to the effect that now he should have a quiet life, and Frances would settle down and not be sentimental. Now Frances was anything but sentimental.

It is notable that when, in our complex language, there are home and foreign words apparently synonymous, the home word is the stronger and sincerer. *Brotherly* sounds more real than *fraternal*: a *ghost* might frighten you, when you would smile at a *spirit*: *happiness* differs from *felicity* as good ale from the Chancellor's claret: while the noisy orators who plead for a *Republic* are certainly no friends to the *Commonwealth*.

There is the same difference between *feeling* and *sentiment*. Now Frances Carey, though full of feeling, had not a particle of what is recognised as sentiment. Having, thanks to her father, read classic literature, she had no taste for morbid and unhealthy fiction. Indeed she seldom looked for any mental sustenance from books beyond the limits of the copious yet well-chosen library which Mr. Carey had left behind him; and probably the "Sentimental Journey" was

the most sentimental book on those shelves.

Frances Carey at this time was twenty-five, being about two years younger than her brother. Hers were the finer qualities which he utterly lacked. She was unselfish; she was imaginative; she had much courage and self-control. Walter's innate selfishness Frances did not perceive; she had always glorified him, and made him a hero, seeing him with eyes of sisterly love. They had much in common—delight in the country, and in all living creatures, and in classical poetry. I trust none of my fair readers will quarrel with Frances for having gained from her father the power of reading the great classic authors. If more girls were fortunate enough to obtain similar tuition, there would be fewer empty and resourceless lives. There is nothing impossible in such learning; there is much that is delightful. In the days when the

literature of England was in its glowing climax —when the Avon of Stratford became for all time a river more famous than Nile or Ganges, than Simois or Eurotas, than Tiber or Rhine—ladies were not ashamed of classical accomplishment. Queen Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey (also for a brief moment Queen of England) were imbued with this higher culture. Why should not a lady “unsphere the spirit of Plato,” or wander through the realm which belongs to broad-browed Homer? Mrs. Browning, the greatest female writer the world has ever known, construed her Greek with a kind and able tutor in a voice

“Somewhat low for *αις* and *οις*.”

Let any young lady who thinks there is no pleasure, but rather something harsh and crabbed, in such study, glance at a translation of the first book of Horace’s odes, by Mary Carmichael, published by Nimmo of

Edinburgh. Here is the Venusian's "advice to a lady":—

"Leuconoë, shut the book of Fate,
And tempt its leaves no more ;
Our better wisdom is to wait,
Whatever be in store :
As many days as God shall give
Both you and I are sure to live.

"Winter and Summer will run on
Longer than you and I ;
And when our years are come and gone,
The sea will not be dry ;
To death at last we all must bow,
We need not ask the when or how.

"Be wise, the dregs are in the cup,
But do not shake the wine ;
Be happy while it sparkles up,
And hope is yours and mine ;
For as we speak, life fleets away ;
To-morrow is not—live to-day."

Those pleasant album verses by Charles Lamb which I have placed at the head of this chapter, show much of the character of Frances Carey. She had masculine intelli-

gence and courage, feminine sweetness and sympathy. Her equal was not in all the arts which ladies can so easily practise in the country; she was unrivalled in gardening, distilling sweet waters and homely wines, superintending the manufacture of pickles and preserves, for which ample materials existed in the kitchen-gardens of Carey Farm. Sir Clifford Coyle, who had wonderful gardens of his own, used to ride slowly past the gates of Carey Farm; he said it was to look at flowers that were far better than he could grow. Some of his friends declared he wanted a glimpse of Miss Carey; if so, he seldom got one, as Frances had rather a contempt for this young baronet. It was hardly deserved; he was only just of age, with his head a little turned by having unexpectedly come into the estate through the death of his uncle; but he was just the sort of young

English gentleman that mellows into a strong sound man.

However, Frances Carey did not like him, and this will I say for her, that she had a fine vein of obstinacy. She maintained the thesis that dislike at first sight is always well-grounded (even as love at first sight), and relied so thoroughly on her instinct in this matter that no subsequent occurrences could alter her fixed opinion of anyone whom she deemed worthy of any opinion at all.

Women have subtler instinct than men, since they cultivate instinct more and reason less. There is an essential difference between reason and instinct; the former links man to the Divinity, the latter to the creatures below him. Men who lead wild lives develop instinct wondrously; take the Red Indians, as described by the master-hand of Cooper, the Scott of America.

How they could follow an enemy's trail, or strike a bee line through unpathed woods to the point they sought! Instinct is dormant with those who are obliged to use their reason perpetually; but women, who are not fettered by that strong necessity, often divine the characters of others—ay, and even conjecture future events—with surprising certainty. So I will not say that Frances was unjustified in her resolute adherence to her first judgments. When her two lovers had so disastrously disappeared, Frances showed no outward sign of trouble, even to her brother. Indeed there was no prominent reason why she should. Her feeling for Stephen Heath had been slight aversion; she intuitively discovered something not quite true in his character. All Avon-side believed in him, except perhaps his father; but Frances was dubious. He was polite, he was plausible, he could talk non-

sense, he could play the flute ; but Frances thought she despised a young fellow who played the flute so wonderfully. He could not bowl at cricket or row on Avon like Hugh Roland—that was quite clear.

Poor Hugh Roland ! Rambling by the side of the river, which winds for near a mile through the grounds of Carey Farm, she questioned her heart about him. She had never made up her mind that she liked him so very much ; she *did* like him—yes—who could help liking such a fine manly fellow, with such astonishing ideas ? And now that he was in such sad trouble, was she to blame for pitying him ? Standing in the slantsunshine, under a slender-shafted drooping birch that was turning purple and brown, and looking pensively at the river that flowed softly below her, she tried to realize the interior of a lunatic asylum—tried to imagine how Hugh Roland endured his

imprisonment. Perhaps her sweet wishes for his welfare were winged, and brought the poor fellow solace in his loneliness.

Then she tried, with that keen intellect of hers, to reason out the case as between Hugh and Stephen. That Hugh was a deliberate murderer she knew to be impossible. That he should have actually killed Stephen in a struggle seemed to her improbable, for he was much stronger than the other, and he had that forbearance which is almost always the result of conscious strength. She looked into "soft-flowing Avon" as if to search for an oracle, but the "silver stream" gave no reply. It was a dire enigma. Could some one else have murdered Stephen Heath? Was he murdered? She could not guess; but of one thing Frances Carey felt as certain as of the sky above her and the trout-haunted river at her feet—Hugh Roland was no murderer.

"He a murderer!" she whispered to herself under the wind-whispering beech. "Why, his great changeable eyes used to fill with tears when any creature suffered pain. Truth comes to light at last, they say; but suppose Hugh should grow old and grey, and sicken and perhaps die, before the truth came for him." Frances found herself drawing so melancholy a picture of the future that she drew herself up with a strong effort of will, and was glad to hear a skylark sing, and to see an iris-tinted kingfisher zigzag across the stream.

At this moment her two little dogs barked sharply. Looking round, she saw an elderly gentleman approaching her. He was of middle height, with very broad shoulders, a ruddy face, and eyes that seemed much too keen for their windows of spectacles; he wore a broad-brimmed hat, blue coat, knee-breeches, and carried a stout oak sap-

ling. As he came up he took off his hat with much courtesy, and explained that he wished to see the scene of the recent murder.

"I fear I am trespassing, madam," he said, in a courtly fashion. "This part of the country is new to me. I am Gabriel Shirley, F.R.G.S. and F.S.A. I am a wanderer. Whenever I hear of anything curious I go at once to see it. I always walk. A horse appears an awkward animal to ascend; and railways never go to the place I want to go to. You have no railway here, I suppose, madam?"

"Our nearest station is six miles."

"Thrice happy vicinage!" he exclaimed, "between which and the abode of the foul fiend six miles of actual space extend. It is as delightful to be far away from the roar and rattle of railways as—may I say?—to

encounter in these sweet solitudes a lovely damsel like yourself."

Mr. Gabriel Shirley was so old, so earnest, so courteous, that Frances could not be offended at the quaint compliment.

"I can show you the scene of the supposed murder quite easily," she said, and led the way to the tranquil spot where she had been first to find the ghastly relics of the struggle.

Quiet enough was it now. The trampled grass had grown again beneath the sombre shadowing trees; the amorous Avon softly wooed the bank . . .

"Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtaketh in his pilgrimage."

"A lovely corner!—a soft, silvan angle that smiles upon one, as Horace might say—too quiet, too fair, for murder to be wrought. Alas! only too truly says the illustrious poet :

On each fair lawn, by every silver flood,
God sheds soft dew, mankind shed tears and blood.'

We are a most unaccountable race, my dear madam, as you will discover when you have lost the divine illusions of youth. But do not lose them too soon, I implore—do not brush the bloom from the butterfly's wing too early."

Mr. Gabriel Shirley then proceeded to examine the place with great care, and made a few notes on some ivory tablets, and then abruptly said to Frances, who had been watching him with amazement and curiosity:

"Madam, I am infinitely thankful! Well has it been said by the illustrious poet:

'Favours are sweet when granted free as air;
But always sweetest from a lady fair.'

I must now wish you good evening; but I shall ever preserve a delicious recollection of these lovely grounds, the placid purling

stream, and, above all, of your fair self, the divinity of the place."

Will it be believed that, in the face of all this flattery, Frances had presence of mind enough to ask him up to the house to have luncheon? She had; and Mr. Gabriel Shirley accepted the invitation; and they sat down to cold salt beef, with pickled shalots and home-brewed ale, in the oak parlour. Mr. Gabriel Shirley did thorough justice to the fare on which he reverently pronounced "*Benedictus benedicat!*" ere he began. Frances regarded him with inquisitive interest; he seemed to her a new variety of the human species. His talk was a marvellous mosaic; he told curious stories of his own adventures; he had walked through most of the Old World, and was thinking of trying that New World which is said to be the older of the twain.

Pity there was nobody to sketch beautiful

Frances in her oak parlour, with wistaria and clematis forcing their way in through the windows, and scent of mignonette and heliotrope on the air, attempting to fathom this keen-eyed broad-shouldered blue-coated old gentleman, who talked of the great wall of China as if it were close at hand, who began his anecdotage with "When I was in Erzeroum the other day!" or, "An acquaintance I met in Moscow!" or, "The King of Siam wanted me to teach him English, and offered me a white elephant; but I had no time, and did not know what to do with the creature!"

At length Mr. Gabriel Shirley rose to go. Frances had hoped Walter would come in, but he did not. The old gentleman said, as he took leave,

"Madam, my most profound thanks. There are those who have entertained angels unaware, but I have had the happier des-

tiny of being unaware entertained by an angel. As the illustrious poet writes :

‘This day will dwell for ever on my mind,
Since beauty always leaves fair thoughts behind.’”

When he was gone Frances tried to make something like an analysis of his character, for her own satisfaction. That instinct of hers, whereof already mention has been made, induced her to like him from the very first; but she had never, in the quiet village of Avonside, where her heretofore uneventful life had almost entirely been passed, met with anyone who at all resembled him. He might have stepped out of his frame in an old picture-gallery. Frances wondered what her father would have thought of him—her father, to whose judgment—or rather to her idea of what his judgment would be—she was wont to appeal in all cases of perplexity. He had so completely moulded her thoughts that she often seemed to imagine him pres-

ent when she needed spiritual help. In the library, when she was reading alone some book that she had read with him, she would unconsciously look up, meaning to ask him a question. I doubt if ever she opened that book-room door without a feeling as if she might see her father in his wonted chair, with a folio open before him, and a look of placid delight in his eyes. Eight happy years of her girlhood had been passed in companionship with her father at Carey Farm; it seemed to her an Elysian time. The morning rides to look after the men; the quiet afternoons in the library, often varied by a row on Avon, when she took the sculls, and her father sat in the stern with a book, now reading some noble passage, now talking as it seemed to her no one else ever talked; the evenings when, over his glass of old port, he would wander into discursive philosophy, which she only

half understood, which she admired as one admires the vague similitudes of terrene things that are built up in the clouds of sunlight. Ah, how often Frances sighed that these quiet enjoyments had passed away for ever. Never more the game of chess on the Summer lawn, with bird and butterfly flitting through the foliage, with dragon-flies from Avon darting on wings of gauze. What fun it was when her father, who could not part from his book, made some oversight, and Frances snatched a victory!

To be thus educated by such a father was no trivial gain to Frances Carey; but, like all things on this planet, it had its drawback. It made the girl too fastidious. She did not recognize among the young men whom she knew the mixture of refinement and resolve, of culture and courtesy, which had characterized Mr. Carey. To be a very

great surgeon requires rare faculties of mind and body, and of this rank was Mr. Carey. Indeed, his early retirement left a manifest blank in the profession, for there was at the moment no young aspirant of real genius. A successor came in time.

There was nothing morbid in the feeling of Frances toward her father, now four years dead. She felt as if his spirit was often near her, giving wise counsel and happiness. She pictured him loitering in his favourite walk, or standing with his arms folded by the river-side, listening to Avon's mysterious murmur as it glided under heavy branches. Always she felt conscious of his presence. She sometimes seemed to feel his last evening kiss. To her brother Walter she said no word of such fancies; he would have laughed at her nonsense. He had never understood his father, and had been

rather afraid of him. If he had known the imaginings of his sister's mind, he would have deemed her mad. This she felt, and never sought his sympathy.

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CHAPTER VI.

AVONSIDE SOCIETY.

“There are no snakes in Iceland.”

THERE are certainly no girls in Avon-side, labourers' daughters excepted. Frances Carey is quite alone. Now that the only two young men in the place are gone for ever, she has nobody in the village of her own class save Mrs. Hutchison and Captain Heath. Both of these are old friends, both have become changed to her since Stephen's disappearance, but in quite diverse ways.

The Captain, in old days, used to be quite

gallant—he would chaff her about her sweethearts, and send her fruit from his gardens—he was a famous gardener—and often found her a nosegay. He knew that his son was fond of her; he did not object, knowing she would have a very good income.

“The girl isn’t formed,” he used to say to Stephen. “She doesn’t know the world; but she’s pretty and clever, and might soon be taught everything. You may do a great deal worse.”

“She is very charming, sir,” said the plausible Stephen; “but that fellow Roland is always after her—and I think she fancies him a little.”

“Roland!” returned the Captain, with half a yawn and half a sneer. “If you are cut out by a hulking lout like that, you are no son of mine, Stephen. Roland!”

The expression of contempt which Cap-

tain Heath put into his ejaculations of this kind cannot be described. He quite believed in the superiority of himself to his son; but then he deemed it his son's duty to be far superior to the ordinary young fellows of the day. And on the whole he was not dissatisfied with him, though he felt intensely disgusted at the idea of his dreading Hugh Roland's rivalry.

But Captain Heath, now that he had lost his son, was altogether a different man. He would not speak to any of his neighbours. Frances was amazed, the first time they met after Hugh Roland's trial—she was about to speak to him, but he looked at her with a glassy stare, as if he had never seen her before in his life; and she, being unacquainted with the usages of fashion, went home, and told her brother, in much perturbation of spirit.

“O, the old boy served me in just

the same way," laughed Walter. "I suppose he thought we were in a conspiracy to get rid of Stephen. It doesn't matter."

"I daresay he will come round in time," said Frances. "I am very sorry for him—who can help being sorry for a man who has lost his only child in such a dreadful way?"

"As to his coming round," replied her brother, "I doubt it. He is just as obstinate as you are, Frances, when you have made up your mind on any point."

"Thank you, Master Walter," she would reply, laughing. "I seem obstinate to you, no doubt, but it is only because you change your mind every minute. When I have made up my mind, I stick to my decision."

Captain Heath went to London a great deal at this time. His son's loss was a heavier blow to him than he could have dreamt it to be; he became restless, and

sought for relief in society. He went to his old club, played whist, *écarté*, hazard, got bitten by the gaming fury which had troubled him in his youth. His re-appearance on the scene amused his old cronies, who all thought he was dead till his son's murder got into the papers. And then they all asked each other whether that really could be old Dick Heath. When he re-visited the glimpses of the gas in St. James's Street, he was made welcome enough. He began to consider whether he would not give up the country altogether, and take rooms in a cozy corner of Mayfair and return to his old habits. There was nobody but himself now, he thought bitterly; he might just as well enjoy the remainder of his life.

One thing which made him incline this way was that he had a wonderful run of luck. He played and betted, and almost invariably won. He began superstitiously to believe in

the influence of some preternatural power that brought him good fortune. The dice and cards seemed his slaves; the horses he backed always won. He found himself quite a millionaire in a short time, and poured so much money into Drummond's that the bankers, who had regarded him as rather a shady customer, began to think he had come into a fortune.

The Captain would have given up his villa at Avonside but for one incident: he fell in love—if one may apply that homely old phrase to what really happened to him. As a fact, he was fascinated by a theatrical siren, who called herself Miss Ethel Clinton, and who played dashing parts in male costume at the Bagatelle Theatre. The lessee of this theatre was a young Liberal member of Parliament, scion of a brewing and banking firm, who had more money than brains, and wasted it on theatres, newspapers, and

racehorses. Young Mr. Lavington met Captain Heath at his club; they grew rather intimate; by-and-by the old boy would accompany his young friend behind the scenes at the Bagatelle. There was much champagne in the green-room, thirstily imbibed by ladies in various stages of undress. The queen of these fairies was Ethel Clinton, who had finer legs and greater impudence than any of them. Old Heath, flattering himself into the belief that he was a young man after all, went the pace with Lavington and his friends. And so liberal were his entertainments at Greenwich and Richmond and elsewhere, that the charming Miss Clinton decided that he must be immensely rich, and resolved to take possession of him altogether. So very eager were her delicate attentions, that the old gentleman positively took flight from London and came home to Avonside. There he sat

down to consider what he should next do. He was in a dilemma. London seemed likely to be too fast for him; Avonside was certainly too slow. In that difficulty let us for the present leave him, and turn to Miss Hutchison.

That excellent but rigid old lady grew friendlier with Frances than she had ever been before. In her tender heart she loved that eccentric nephew of hers, whom she had never been able to understand. It was well that such contrasts should exist in families—they always, indeed, do exist in families where the intellectual power is strong, and sometimes arises to genius. The stronger the sap of the tree of humanity, the more various its products.

Frances Carey felt great pleasure in causing Miss Hutchison to thaw a little. Eager to be friendly, our Frances could not understand people who shut themselves up

in a shell, like a snail or a tortoise. This was no fancy of hers. She would rather rise skyward like the lark through the radiant clouds of morning, and rain music downward on the world. Her perfectly sincere kindness was irresistible. For a long while Miss Hutchison strove to resist it, being of opinion that Frances was little better than one of the wicked, and that her company ought to be avoided. But Frances in due time conquered this strange prejudice; and, though they were never closely intimate, they became very friendly. And, when Stephen Heath was gone, Heaven knows whither, Frances Carey's kind feelings melted the old lady's outer snow, and she became quite affectionate and sociable. The old lady and the girl were bound together by one strong feeling common to them both—the belief that Hugh was innocent. Far more certain of it were they than poor Hugh

himself, who indeed at this time was scarcely certain of his own existence. Call him not weak, my brother ; imagine for yourself what it is to be suddenly accused and convicted of murder, and thrust among murderous lunatics. Miss Hutchison, resolutely believing in her sister's son, was grateful to Frances for having a like belief ; and so they became fast friends in due time.

It was perhaps just as well for Frances. She, though taught by a very wise and thoughtful father, had lost that loving tutor years too soon. Her brother Walter was well enough in his way, but by no means capable of giving Frances efficient guidance. She had therefore to think life out for herself ; and intercourse with a person like Miss Hutchison, whose ideas on all matters seemed entirely different from her own, but who was evidently true and earnest and good, caused her to examine the basis of her own

theory of life, and to look with tolerance on the theories of other people.

“ A theory of life ! ” exclaims my fair young reader. “ Why, who has any need for such a thing ? Life itself is enough for me. I live, and laugh, and some time I shall love, I suppose. I can do very well without a theory of life.”

Can you, child ? Already have you formed your theory ; to live, and laugh, and if possible love. Heartily I hope you may carry it through. But there are those whom such a theory will not fit. There are those who desire to suffer. There are those who desire to weep. There are those who desire to hate.

And, alas, the theory of life changes with age. Are you twenty or thirty, reader ? Imagine yourself at forty, fifty, sixty. These are small ages to a growing brain ; Titian painted nobly within a few steps of

the century. But will you, girl or boy of twenty, recognize your old self twenty years hence? Will the same gay spirit dwell with you? I hope so; but it is only to be obtained by a pure life, and a courageous contempt for all things base and mean. This given, youth with its vigour may pass unconsciously into age with its wisdom. Strength at twenty may be power at eighty.

In the comfortable old house inhabited by Miss Hutchison, Frances is a frequent visitor. Gradually the two ladies grow to understand each other. Frances, whom her father had taught to be rather a Bohemian, grew to comprehend the saintly Puritanism of poor Hugh Roland's aunt. Ordinary human beings have so many more points of agreement than of difference, that to dwell on the points of difference is to produce caricature. The ancient maiden lady was a Puritan; the younger maid was

imbued with her father's refinement, culture, tolerance; but both were women, full of love, pity, candour, hope.

On the quaint gravelled terrace in front of the Hollies—a name aptly given to Miss Hutchison's house by reason of an immense array of that unrivalled evergreen—the old lady and Frances used often to pass a quiet hour. They had one thought in common. Both felt kindlier towards unfortunate Hugh Roland since the misadventure which had put to his career so sad an ending. Miss Hutchison forgave him all his eccentricities and irregularities: if she could have welcomed him home how gladly would she have done it! Then as to Frances: she had no forward love-fancies, and had hardly cared to ask herself how she felt towards him when she could see him every day. She liked him a little, she thought: she thought very little about him. But now

that he was shut sadly from the world, paying the penalty of a crime which she could not believe he had committed, Frances began to question herself about him—began to think that she really loved him . . . a little. She did not confess this to Miss Hutchison.

Perhaps the old lady guessed at it. There is a curious insight into the science of love on the part of your venerable maiden lady, who might be supposed to know nothing about it. Ah, but she has had her time; she was sought by many a wooer; she has known what it is to hear the broken utterance of a loving voice. Why is she unwedded, then? Who shall say? Perhaps she was too good for any who sought her. Be that as it may, she is a wise instructress of young girls, if only they will deign to listen to her. Unluckily every new generation, male and female, believes itself in ad-

vance of its progenitors. How hard it seems
to master the great truth that humanity is
unchangeable !

CHAPTER VII.

HUGH ROLAND.

"The mystery of madness may be studied here."

HUGH ROLAND gradually freed himself from the numbness of brain which his great misfortune had brought on him. The regular arrangements of the vast asylum were favourable to mental quietude. Skilful medical supervision was directed to the prisoners, and such as were capable of employment and inclined to work were occupied in the work that seemed to suit them best. Now Hugh had never done any real straightforward work in his life.

He had always, in mind and body, been a desultory man. There wasn't a swifter runner, a better cricketer, a shrewder wrestler on the country side; and his mental acquirements, though utterly irregular, were by no means to be despised. I will not say he was quite as good a classic as the lady whom he loved, but he was certainly a better mathematician—indeed, if he had been taken in good time by a clever coach, he might have been a senior wrangler. This, however, was not written in his destiny.

When he had grown accustomed to the rules and habits of his new dwelling-place, he began to think carefully over the past. The future he dismissed. In this world he had no future—only death could release him from his dreary monotonous imprisonment. As his mind cleared, the pain of this thought grew less tolerable. He brooded

over it until his loss of freedom threatened to drive him as mad as he was supposed to be.

But then a happy change of idea caused him, as I have said, to dismiss the future, and to trace back the incidents of the past. The thought that he might have been a murderer troubled him terribly. As, however, he went back through all that occurred on the night of the quarrel, he thoroughly cleared himself. Stephen Heath had used insulting language; he, having much superior strength, had swung him out of his way, and gone quietly home in the moonlight without him. He remembered all about it now. Whoever had committed the crime, he was innocent. When this belief came clearly upon him, he looked upon the long monotonous future with less sadness. Sometimes, indeed, there was a flash of inspiration, which seemed to tell him that he had

not lost freedom for ever—that he should be proven innocent in time. The idea cheered his heart, enabling him to endure the dreary days—all equally alike, all alike dreary.

The vision of Frances Carey came to him at intervals, sometimes bringing pleasure and sometimes pain. He conjured up the riverside lawn, the beautiful girl among her flowers and birds, the easy tranquil freedom of her life. He had never told her that he loved her. It was as well; yet she must have seen it. When was he in her company without following her every movement with eager eyes? Ah, she must have known well what he had not yet dared to say.

What would she have said if he had asked her, before that unhappy night? He could not guess. He cursed his want of promptitude and courage. If he had asked

her, if those lovely lips had said *yes*, then they might have been wandering happily together by the Avon, talking of the fair future. For Frances how he would have worked! What a happy home they would have had! He pictured every trivial luxury of such a home of love; he tortured himself perpetually; his dreary existence was nothing to the mental hell which he created for himself.

Often the great asylum had visitors. To be regarded with curious interest as an unusual specimen of the murderous maniac by fashionable ladies and gentlemen, who walked through the place as they would through a menagerie, was not at all pleasant. The inmates, who were questionless mad, seemed not wholly to like it; and Hugh Roland, who by this time had firmly grasped the fact of his own sanity, detested being made a show of, pointed at by a dainty

parasol in a light-gloved little hand, as the celebrated Avonside murderer. He took, however, a great fancy to one visitor who passed through the wards, and was treated with much deference, and who asked a few questions about him specially. This was an old-fashioned elderly gentleman, in quaint attire, whose keen eyes had looked upon the spot where the dire deed was done, with Frances Carey as his guide. Though Hugh knew not of this, there was something in the old gentleman's pleasant ruddy face that cheered him at first sight.

"He seems sane enough, to an inexperienced eye," said Gabriel Shirley to the officer who attended him. It was in a whisper that Hugh could hear. "I looked at the spot where the murder was committed a month or two ago—it is a green lawn, too beautiful for murder—and the young lady who showed it me did not seem at all as-

sured that the actual truth on the subject had been made manifest. As the illustrious poet remarks,

‘Although mysterious are the ways of crime,
One thing is sure—truth will be known in time.’”

“He has seen Frances,” thought Hugh, as the blue coat passed from his sight. “He says truth will be known in time. I accept the omen. Who can he be?”

Hugh, quiet and docile, and showing no signs of being troublesome, obtained kindly treatment from the officials. He had made up his mind to the inevitable, and tried as far as possible to reduce his fancies and wishes to a state of *Nirvana*.

No occupation was found for him at first, but when the Spring came, and the Superintendent suggested that he should work in the gardens at intervals, Hugh rejoiced at the idea, for he was fond of gardening, and, indeed, was skilful in the art. He had a

natural faculty for pruning fruit-trees and budding roses, for bringing melons and cucumbers to perfection. The idea of doing his favourite work in the open air was to him perfectly delightful.

The gardens are large. Of course there is a strong force of warders in them when the lunatics are at work. Only well-behaved patients were employed. Men more troublesome, who required out-door exercise, were sent into the fields under the care of warders. Hugh was soon regarded as harmless and safe, and the keepers took little notice of him, while the head-gardener, who saw that he was skilful, gave him delicate work to do, and was well satisfied with the way in which he did it. So Hugh spent his time almost entirely in the gardens; for the modern humane method of dealing with lunatics is to give them such employment as it is found affords them the

greatest pleasure. The head-gardener, a kind-hearted Scotchman, named Mactavish, with the Christian name of Alexander, took readily to Hugh, recognizing in him an efficient helper.

"If that lad had been a gardener," he would say to his wife, as he smoked his evening pipe over a glass of whiskey-toddy, "he'd never have been a murderer. The blithe air of heaven, and the sweet smell of earth, would have kept his brain clear. Why, he's cured now; he's not so mad as Dr. O'Brien."

O'Brien was one of the resident physicians, a humorous Irishman, who was Mactavish's aversion. The gardener could not understand a joke; the doctor, out of his profession, could understand nothing else. A man of that sort is really of value in a great institution where everything is carried on with necessary monotony; he prevents stagna-

tion, and keeps society alive. No men have greater need to cultivate the sense of humour than those who have to deal with the sadder phases of life. Hence is it that great physicians are usually great wits, and that there is a play of facetiæ to light up the heavy atmosphere of courts of justice. But Mactavish took the world very seriously, and could not understand the jokes and laughter of the light-hearted doctor.

"Well, Sandy," said his wife, a little woman with a sharp tongue, "you're always down on the doctor, but he's the cleverest we have here, as well as the merriest. It cheers one up to hear his voice. If the lad is as sane as Dr. O'Brien, it's my opinion he ought to be hanged for that murder."

Mactavish, who knew it was vain to argue with his wife, retired from the contest, and consoled himself with his pipe.

There was a tall haggard grey-haired

man who worked in the gardens—worked well too, having been a gardener in his youth. He had shot his sweetheart thirty years ago. This man took a great fancy to Hugh Roland, and contrived to get work as near him as possible ; and they used to have little bits of talk at intervals, mostly on vegetables and fruit and flowers. He loved his art, this man, and it had humanized him : but he pined for freedom always. He had a morbid idea of escape. For years he had pondered over a way : but he had stayed so long within prison-walls that he dreaded the great world outside. To revisit the glimpses of the moon seemed to him a dreadful business. So he wanted a companion ; but as yet he had seen no one whose face tempted him to yield up his confidence. Now in Hugh Roland he believed he saw a faithful comrade of the right sort ; and he resolved to try him.

It was a long time before he took the first step. They worked together in adjacent beds, exchanging occasional short sentences, mostly as to the weather, the soil, the growth of things: they furnished an example of Matthew Arnold's fine saying,

"We mortal millions live alone,"

for while the elder gardener's heart was filled with an intense passion for liberty, while he had before him always a dream of open spaces, long lanes between woodland, winding rivers, and *no high walls and iron doors*—Hugh Roland's vision was of Frances, on the lawn by Avon, with her dogs scampering and her pigeons fluttering, and her gay lips uttering some lively song. Was she just as gay now? Did the clear voice climb the invisible steps of air as nimbly? He hoped so. Yet he would have her think of him a little—not quite enough to bring moisture into the serene blue eyes.

To those who suffer, there is perhaps no occupation so full of solace as gardening. It is work in which you are brought strangely close to the hand of God. Every flower that opens, every shower that falls, is a miracle of His. As "the Spring came slowly up that way," the yearly movement of the world took the bitterness out of Hugh Roland's soul. After all, what had he to complain of? Loss of freedom? What would freedom be without Frances? and he was by no means sure that Frances loved him. Indeed, as he called back, with the unerring memory of love, the incidents of their intercourse, he failed to detect anything but kindly friendship. Still he had just a gleam of hope that, if she could see him after all his suffering, that friendship would ripen into love.

Life at the Asylum was just tolerable to Hugh Roland while he was at work in the

gardens ; and he realized the truth that hard work is the best of all cures for trouble. When he was obliged to be indoors, he was anything but content. The Asylum has two classes of inhabitants, utterly unfit to associate with each other : there are those for whom it was originally designed—persons who have committed homicide under the influence of mania : but with these are mingled members of the dangerous and desperate classes, burglars and thieves from their birth, men whose fathers and grandfathers were criminal by vocation. Such men, going mad in ordinary gaols, are sent to the Asylum, where there is not room enough altogether to separate them from inmates of the other class. Some of these are mere wild beasts, who tear with their finger-nails the floors and walls of their cells, and who are always longing to commit acts of violence. Others are cunning and crafty, and

quite capable of combining for any evil purpose. Madness does not divest these men of their natural instinct to commit crime : they educate each other as thoroughly as the saner thieves in the common gaols. They have no motive for good conduct : for, if their sanity is found to return, they are of course sent away to endure the remainder of their sentence. The wards in which the worst of these men are confined are like fragments of Pandæmonium.

Room, however, was found for Hugh Roland in a ward where none of the convict class were admitted. Here he had ample liberty, and various forms of amusement, but his society was not at all pleasant. He, like most of the public, had an impression that many criminals, really sane, had been able to escape punishment by pretending insanity ; but his experience within the Asylum destroyed this fancy. He did not meet a single

person who approached sanity. Most of the men by whom he was surrounded were murderers. One, a gentleman of the medical profession, had rushed from his house into the street, and shot a harmless passer-by, under the delusion that he had just been in his bedroom attempting to drug him. This patient passed his time in the production of water-colour drawings, and could talk sensibly enough about the art that engrossed him ; but his mania was permanent, and he still imagined himself pursued by conspirators, and if the subject were mentioned he became fiercely eloquent at once.

Hugh remarked that many of his fellow-prisoners took up some pursuit and followed it persistently, though not always intelligently. One would study mathematics from the biggest book on the subject he could find, and dash down wholly unmeaning figures on paper, and fancy he was solving problems.

Another seemed always to be writing long and learned essays, which he carefully locked into his desk ; but if you had examined them, you would have found it hard to select a sentence with any meaning. The most successful workers seemed to be those who tried some mechanical imitative art ; there were some expert hands at modelling statuettes, and even knitting, netting, and crochet occupied some of the men. Hugh Roland cared for none of these things. His only satisfactory time was in the garden ; when not occupied there, he was apt to sink into a state of almost torpidity.

There were abundant forms of amusement. Hugh could smoke, but his palate rejected tobacco. He could read ; there were numerous books, instructive and amusing : at intervals the worthy chaplain went to town, and sent home a huge parcel of second-hand books from Mudie's. But Hugh had not

the power to concentrate his mind on subjects that require thought, while, if he opened a novel, he only thought what poor weak pallid stuff it seemed in comparison with his own romance, and how very much less earnest was the hero than himself, and what a wax-doll the heroine seemed as he remembered Frances. No; he could not read. He tried billiards, but as none of his opponents had the faintest idea of a cannon, and as they insisted on counting as much as they pleased whatever might happen when they struck the balls, he did not find the game interesting. So he came at last to loitering in the corridor, and listening to the innumerable canaries that inhabited their own small prisons, yet did not fret for freedom, and sank into a state of mental lassitude.

There were two persons who kept him from lapsing into absolute apathy. One was

the chaplain, whose kind and intelligent sympathy gave him great solace. After a while he became a regular attendant at the daily service. In this he had few companions; but on Sundays, when the select congregation of patients was re-inforced by the wives and families of the warders, he seemed to get a passing glimpse of the outer world.

Perhaps his chief refreshment was an occasional talk with the superintendent—a man of vigour, promptitude, and decision, with a cheery humour that was infectious. The doctor was in the habit of encouraging his patients, when he made his rounds, to talk of things that specially interested them; and he was so good a listener that a chat with him was regarded by the more intelligent inmates as a great treat. Hugh Roland noticed that men who never cared to say a word to anyone else would become fluent when the doctor addressed them. He

found also that in the same circumstances he also became talkative, and was drawn on to give an account of some of his various wanderings through England, in days when his feet were free to go wheresoever they listed.

Did the doctor and the chaplain really think him mad? Hugh Roland was wont to ask himself. Knowing that he was not, he could not quite understand how any one else should conceive that he was. Probably the chaplain never thought of questioning the point, but certainly the superintendent did not suspect him of sanity. His experience had shown him that lunatic cunning oftens runs in the direction of concealing lunacy; that the real germ of madness may lie so deep as rarely to make any sign on the surface. Hugh Roland's quietude and good conduct did not cause the doctor to think him sane; he assumed that he mur-

dered Heath in a paroxysm of rage caused by severe provocation. Such a paroxysm might not recur for the remainder of his life... but then it *might*. He considered the case to be difficult and doubtful; but he assuredly would not have pronounced his patient free from mania.

Doubtless the modern way of treating madness is often curative; but to be compelled to reside among lunatics, and to be treated as one, might well drive a sane man out of his mind. Indeed, but for the chapel and the garden, I think Hugh Roland would probably have sunk into a state of imbecile apathy. Real lunatics, especially of the male sex, isolate themselves; they brood over their own troubles, or concentrate themselves on their pursuits, to which they attach immeasurable importance. It wearied Hugh Roland to see each man in his corner, one painting, another scribbling,

another using the needles, another studying Greek with lack-lustre eyes, but all completely absorbed in themselves. He was glad when he could escape to the garden, and tire himself out with spade and hoe.

Hugh rather liked the very rare occasions when ladies visited the male wards of the Asylum. He was reminded of Frances. They seldom spoke to him; they were naturally more interested in the patients who were painting or modelling or playing on violins of their own make, or causing tame birds to roost on little ever-greens in pots, or practising Roman Catholic hymns on the key-bugle. Hugh was uninteresting; he did none of these things. But he watched these angel-visitants, when they came, revering all ladies for the sake of the one lady whom he loved; and he scrutinized their dresses and bonnets and gloves as he had never been accustomed to do, wondering whether

Frances was dressed in any such fashions—whether that was the way she wore her hair.

Still his healthiest time was in the garden, hard at work, resting on his spade sometimes to listen to a skylark or watch a flight of rooks, or to gaze at the wild hills southward, ridge beyond ridge, that seemed to give the mind a sense of illimitable freedom. He had roamed through all that region; he could often catch a glimpse of a hill-summit which he had climbed one sunny day, and had been surprised to behold the sea.

One day the old gardener made up his mind, and took an opportunity of saying to Hugh, in a hurried whisper—

“Can you do the deaf and dumb alphabet?”

“Yes,” quoth Hugh.

“On one hand?”

"Yes."

"Good," said the man ; and for the present said no more.

A day or two passed. One morning Hugh noticed that his comrade's fingers were gesticulating, and with much difficulty made out what they said. The difficulty arose from the fact that the old gardener had special notions of spelling.

"Do you see that door?" said the fingers.

It was a green door in the wall, down in the great southern garden, and when it was open, Hugh Roland could see leagues of wild landscape. The view was familiar to him from the windows above. It was a tantalizing vision of that land of freedom from which he was for ever excluded.

"We can run away, then, threw that," said again the old gardener's fingers. "I no wear thay kepe the kee."

Hugh Roland, wonderstruck by this pro-

posal, made some sort of incoherent answer.

"Ow bad u spel!" was the old man's rejoinder.

Several of these digital conversations occurred day after day; and at last Hugh grew to think all day, and dream all night, of possible freedom. The fancy haunted him, and would not let him go. He did not consider what he should do if he escaped in a penniless state: he only thought that perhaps he might again see Frances Carey.

CHAPTER VIII.

ESCAPE.

“If you would do a deed,
Wait till the moment comes—then take your spring,
Headless of every danger; as the falcon
Sleeps in the air until he sees his quarry,
Then stoops.”

A DAY came. The chief gardener was away. The [May morning was hot. The warders were drowsy. The little green door stood temptingly ajar. You could see beyond it long stretches of grass.

“Kum at wunst!” telegraphed the old gardener, sliding towards the door. Hugh followed, as if he were magnetized. They passed through. No one had seen them

yet. Off they went, under the shadow of the lofty wall.

Alack! turning a corner, they ran right into the arms of a stalwart warder. But the old gardener, mad with the thought of freedom, had the strength of ten men. He sprang suddenly on the sturdy officer, and hurled him to the ground. The man was stunned by the fall, and before he could recover himself, his assailant and Hugh were out of sight. Hugh was the fastest runner in his native vicinage, but this marvellous old man kept pace with him. Away they went, through a wild wide country, not thinking for a moment to what point of the compass they tended. Hugh Roland, strong of wind and limb, had hard work to keep up with the old man, who flew along as if endowed with preternatural speed and endurance. They met no one, for they kept far from all roads. Hugh felt like Faust in

the company of Mephistopheles, and found himself shouting aloud :

“We ride apace
Upon steeds of Thrace,
Through time and space.

“In woodland lair,
Our fleet feet scare
The fox and hare.

“O glory and glee!
Over land, over sea,
We are free, we are free!”

“Right, lad!” shouted the mad old gardener, two yards away. “That’s the song to sing. Roar away!”

I suppose there is a time in the lives of most men when, like Faust, they have met Mephistopheles, “the only genuine devil of these modern times,” as Carlyle calls him—the mocking sneering scientific fiend—the very essence of Negation and Denial. At this moment he seems to have a famous innings: he turns tables and teaches Darwin-

ism. Chaos is come again, if we may believe his Fiendship : there is no God, no cosmos, no light. Mephistopheles, the Hater of Light, will assail every man in his time ; happy he who can laugh to scorn the logical demon, pointing to the glorious sun, a lamp lighted and maintained from days immeasurable by the simple thought of Him in whom is no darkness at all. Mephistopheles hath many disguises to-day ; you meet him in pulpit, in lecture-hall, in erudite journal ; he is the Modern Teacher. God cannot be your father, since it is unphilosophical to suppose there is a God. Your souls cannot be immortal, since what you fondly fancy is a soul is merely an accidental property of matter. You are only casual developments from lower types, and very likely something higher may be developed from you. Thus wisely speaketh Professor Mephistopheles.

Twilight fell . . . a misty starless twilight.

The old gardener had been gaining considerably on Hugh, getting at last so far ahead that his shouts grew fainter on the wind. Hugh, indeed, was beginning to flag. Hours had passed since he ate or drank. His mad comrade, drunk with delight of freedom, felt neither hunger nor thirst nor weariness. On he went shouting wildly. But Hugh was beaten at last. Blindly and slowly feeling his way, he came to a wicket-gate, leading, he thought, through some cottage-garden. He fumbled with the latch. When he had opened the gate he walked unsteadily up the gravel path, with some vague idea of imploring shelter and succour. But he had not strength to do it. He reached the porch, sank down on its hospitable seat, and fell at once into a deep sleep that was half faintness.

Meanwhile the old gardener rushed forward wildly, forgetting his companion. He

broke through hedges, waded streams, forced his way forward without a thought. His strong clothing was torn to tatters, his skin lacerated ; he was a mass of blood and bruises. He felt no pain.

Suddenly he paused in his mad career. He was crossing a bridge over a dark deep slow weedy stream. What made him stop ? The clouds had been moving before a late-risen wind, and all at once the silver moon, the Lady of Light, swam clear into the serene blue. It was the full moon.

It was under a full moon, thirty years before, this old man had slain his sweetheart.

Wildly yet steadfastly he stared at that marvellous orb, whose influence on the human race is a truth beyond the comprehension of the mathematical astronomer. Then he turned to the parapet of the bridge, and saw the reflex image broken by the water that moved slowly through a tortuous

tangle of weed, and shuddered. Suddenly he cried, in a piercing voice, that startled cottagers in their beds for a mile round,

“Jane! my Jane! I see you! I am coming!”

He sprang over the parapet, and sank into the weedy water as if it were a bed of welcome rest. Very quietly the old madman drowned, and his body was not discovered for months.

When Hugh Roland awoke the sun was shining, the birds were singing, and a young girl of about sixteen, evidently a natty little country servant, was watching him with amazed eyes. He got up and stretched himself, and looked round. He felt terribly weak, and had to steady himself by one of the fir-poles that supported the rustic portico. It was a one-storied cottage, with a lawn in front through which trickled a stream, and a gate opening on a wide stretch of common,

with abundant trees upon it. This he saw ; then he sat down again, in sheer weakness, and looked helplessly at the maiden.

“O, if you please, sir,” she said, “if you want to see master, he’ll be in to breakfast soon.”

“I am very hungry,” quoth Hugh, in a weak voice.

The girl ran off on the instant, and in a few moments returned with a bowl of milk and a huge lump of bread and butter. Hugh was famished. He ate greedily, and soon felt like a giant refreshed.

“I hope you’re better, sir,” said the little maid.

“Indeed I am,” he answered. “You are very kind, and I have nothing to offer you but thanks.”

“O, here comes master !” she exclaimed ; and Hugh, looking towards the gate, saw enter, accompanied by a stately shaggy deer-

hound, that broad-shouldered ruddy-faced keen-eyed old gentleman whom he had seen in the Asylum. His right hand carried a spud, his left was full of wild-flowers. The deerhound stalked up to Hugh Roland, and gave a sniff of welcome ; the girl curtsied to her master, basin in hand. Mr. Gabriel Shirley looked amused.

“Go and get breakfast, Hetty,” he said. “So, sir, you have scaled the walls of that prison. I oftentimes think I am like the god Heimdall, that sentinel hated by the giants, whose eyesight pierces a hundred leagues, and who can hear the grass grow. I felt assured that we should meet, when I saw the beautiful lady you loved on the margin of the beautiful river. I knew you would get free and come to me when I beheld you in that menagerie of maniacs. As the illustrious poet says,

‘From heart to heart the waves of wonder roll ;
That man is blind who sees not with the soul.’

Come; has my hand-maiden refreshed you? If so, enter; undress and take repose. I will show you the way."

Hugh Roland had not strength to thank his kind entertainer. He obeyed; Mr. Shirley showed him a quiet bed-room, with a white uncurtained bed, and left him. Hugh could only just stammer out,

"God bless you, sir!"

CHAPTER IX.

LAVINGTON ARRIVES.

ASTROLOGOS.—Hark, the guard's horn! The smoking team
comes merrily

Down the last hill, and wakes the wondering villagers.
I liked the mail.

ALOUETTE.—If rails would only fail, Papa,
'Twould be delightful; no more horrid railway trains.

The Comedy of Dreams.

CAPTAIN HEATH was at this time in a highly excited state. He had lost his son, who was a perpetual drain upon him; but he had unexpectedly gained a large sum of money. Moreover, his stay in London had awakened his old fancies, and as he looked on his green lawn, he thought how

much pleasanter was the green cloth of the card-table; and as he heard the skylark sing, he vowed it was a miserable jingle compared with the charming *chansons* of Ethel Clinton after dinner at Richmond. Mr. Lavington, M.P., who saw his friend's unsettled state, determined to take advantage of it; he had a great scheme for forming a company to purchase a large tract of wild land in Ireland, which was reported to be full of minerals. The land was Lavington's own, a valueless heritage from a relation, but he did not intend everybody to know that. He intended Captain Heath to be a director, and to put all his money into it; and at this time there was much correspondence passing between the two. Heath was wont, before he breakfasted, to walk down to the garden-gate, and meet the tardy postman.

This he did one fine May morning, and received a goodly budget, which he shoved

into the side-pocket of his coat, reading them one by one as he smoked his cigar and sauntered up and down in front of his house. There was one from Lavington—a hasty scrawl, in the fiery impetuous hand of a young fellow who looked on the world as his oyster. Thus it ran :

“Reform Club. Monday.

“DEAR HEATH,

“I am coming your way in a day or two. Have set up a new team, and want to give them a good spin. May bring a friend, perhaps.

“By the way, have you seen that the fellow who murdered your son has escaped?

“Have some bread and cheese and radishes ready—not forgetting beer.

“Yours,

“WYLDOTE LAVINGTON.”

The Captain crunched this letter in his
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hand with something like a curse, and then unfolded his *Times* to see the statement verified. There was no doubt of it. A quiet paragraph related the escape of two criminal lunatics, both murderers—John Fowler and Hugh Roland. They had knocked down a warder, and run away—that was all. Whether any attempt was being made to recapture them did not at all appear. Indeed the paragraph ran so easily that an uninformed reader might think murderous maniacs were rather encouraged to run away.

The Captain went in to breakfast, grumbling over one thing and another in his voluminous correspondence—grumbling especially about Hugh's escape and Lavington's threatened visit. Boyd, his man-servant, his factotum indeed, a cunning useful Scotch-Irishman, always knew full well when the Captain's news had displeased him, always

silently chuckled when his master swore.

The coffee received the first ebullition of wrath : it was too weak, it was burnt, it was cold. Then he soliloquized, sometimes aloud, as thus :

“They’ve let that young scoundrel go. Everything mismanaged with a set of Radicals in power. Two murderers let loose to do just as they like ! Why, they’ll be murdering everybody, right and left.”

A change of subject. Eggs overdone.

“One minute and a half, you blockhead ! I have told you a dozen times. If that stupid girl can’t look at the clock, do it yourself. Nothing is more indigestible than a hard-boiled egg.”

Mr. Boyd seemed rather amused than frightened by his irascible master.

“Confound Lavington !” exclaims the Captain next. “What does he want here with his four-in-hand ? I wonder whom he

means to bring? Bread and cheese and radishes! He'll be wanting all the delicacies of the season. He won't get them."

Having breakfasted and grumbled, Captain Heath turned out to stroll through the little village: a very compact village is Avonside, with no straggling streets. Close to the churchyard gate is the old-fashioned little inn, the "King's Arms;" and then you cross the road to Chessington; and then there is a saddler's shop, a butcher's shop, and an ironmonger's. This is one side of the street; on the other is a barber's, and a rather prosperous-looking grocer's and draper's, well-supported by the country farmers. A couple of good houses complete this side: one the Rectory, the other the residence of a retired captain in the mercantile marine, who misanthropically nurses his gout, and declines to associate with any-

body: Each of these houses has a row of pollarded limes in front of it.

Captain Heath entered this heart of the village by the churchyard path, and on the pavement by the saddler's shop he encountered Walter Carey. He did not like Carey, nor Carey him: two selfish people never like each other. Besides, Heath always disliked people better off than himself—and Carey came into that category. However, they were always on the friendliest terms, apparently: and Heath would have been very glad for his son to marry Frances.

"Seen the *Times*, Carey?" said the Captain, as they met.

"No: any news?"

"That fellow Roland has escaped. Look, here's the paper. I call it a confounded shame to let a man off for a murder because he's a lunatic, and then to let him escape as

easily as possible. Two men have got away, you see. We shall have them killing defenceless women and children on the roads soon."

"I had no idea," said Walter, when he had read the paragraph, "that an escape could be managed so easily. It seems very strange."

"Strange! It's a burning shame, Carey. They ought to hold a court-martial on the Governor. I call the whole thing atrocious! Fancy meeting those two men in their mad state! I shouldn't like it!"

When the news reached Frances, she hurried away as soon as possible to talk it over with Miss Hutchison. The old lady was immensely excited.

"What *will* he do, dear?" she asked. "Poor Hugh! To think of his having got away! But then he has no money, you know; and I'm sure he hasn't the least

idea of making any, even if he dared be seen anywhere. I shall be in such a terrible state till I hear something more."

"I think," said Frances, "that, if Hugh has had courage and energy enough to escape, he will be able to take care of himself afterwards. Really, dear Miss Hutchison, I am very pleased about it. The real murderer will be found out some time or other, and then Hugh can come back, and I shall be very glad to see him."

"You will see him before that," said the old lady, in an excited whisper. "He will come here to see you, be sure. All the Rolands are like that: they must see their sweethearts."

"I am no sweetheart of his," said Frances. to whom the idea, half-pleasant, half-alarming, of a stealthy visit from Hugh Roland had not occurred before.

"He loves you," said Miss Hutchison:

"You know that. And he will come to you very soon, I am sure. Frances, take charge of something to give the poor dear boy from me."

She got from a quaint corner cupboard a comfortable little canvas bag full of gold, and she wrote on a bit of paper, which she put into it "From Aunt Margaret. Work hard, and pray to God."

"You will take this, dear, won't you?" she said.

"Yes," replied Frances: "but he is much more likely to come and see you."

"O, no, no, you know better," said the old lady. "He *must* come to you. I hope he will come soon."

"If he *is* coming, I hope he will," said Frances to herself, walking homeward laden with gold. "Now I shall be thinking of Hugh, and expecting to see him all day and all night."

Frances Carey was right about herself. She soon wished Miss Hutchison had not put the idea of Hugh's return into her head. She talked about the matter to her old friend Rachel.

"Do you really think he may come, Rachel?" she said.

"Well, miss, he's a stark lad, and if he got over them hugeous walls, I should think he'd go anywhere. I'm sure I hope he'll come when there's a chance to give him some good honest beef and ale, for I suppose he's been half-starved."

"O, no, Rachel. They are very well treated in those places."

"I'm bound to believe you, miss; but I don't hold they get as good salt beef as I cures, or as good ale as old Tom Nagle brews; so when he does make his appearance, Miss Frances, please tell me, and we'll give him as good a cold collection as any

they had at those archway meetings you used to go to at Chessington."

From this time Frances, a young lady of well-balanced mind, who feared not the petulant bull, or the ebrious agriculturist of bucolic life, felt herself growing nervous. She could not turn a corner without expecting to come upon Hugh Roland. She carried Miss Hutchison's heavy little bag always about with her, to the great detriment of the pocket of her dresses. She dreamt of him—dreams the most grotesque and disconnected. One night she saw him as clearly as ever she had seen him by day, only he had Stephen Heath's head on his shoulders instead of his own. As day after day passed, Frances heartily wished that he would come at once, if he meant coming at all.

Of course she and Walter frequently talked over the escape of Hugh Roland, and it led to a kind of cool feeling between the

brother and sister. Walter *would* speak of Hugh as an unquestionable murderer, and predict that he would do something villainous.

"We'll fasten our doors and windows well," he would say: "that maniac will try to break in and murder you or me, or both of us. It is a confounded shame they let such dangerous fellows escape!"

Frances, who had never quite made up her mind as to her feeling toward Hugh, was in the habit of listening without reply to her brother's sneers; but on this occasion she could not endure it, and said,

"Walter, you are too hard on Hugh Roland. If he killed Stephen, I am sure he was dreadfully provoked."

"If I!" said Walter, contemptuously.

"You are unfair," she replied. "You never liked the poor fellow, and so you believe the worst of him."

"You like him enough for us both," he

said. "I never was quite satisfied with Roland. He frittered his time away. With the money he had, he should have gone to work in the world, and made himself a position, instead of lounging about Avonside, and dangling after you. Harm always come of such doings."

"Stephen Heath was as bad," she said, feeling all the while that Hugh had a very poor defender.

"Heath was dependent on his father, who wished him to remain at home. Roland was quite independent, and might have made himself a good position with a little energy and industry. If he had done that, I should have had some respect for him."

Frances made a poor fight, for she would not confess to her brother what as yet she had not confessed to herself. So he had his own way, and plagued his sister terribly with persistent predictions of some dire

deed which the escaped lunatic was sure to do. Had he known that all this harassing only caused Frances to think more about Hugh Roland than she otherwise would, it might have caused him to leave the theme alone. Between Miss Hutchison's heavy canvas bag and Walter's unpleasant remarks, Frances had scarcely a waking moment without thought of Hugh. Perhaps she dreamed of him as well.

The worry of all this, and the hourly expectation of seeing Hugh Roland, made her very nervous. She fancied confinement must have changed him. She imagined him coming suddenly upon her, a scarcely recognizable phantom of his former self. Her only cure for this mental irritation was to go out into the gardens, and seek her father's favourite walks, and try to think what *he* would have said, what *he* would have done. It gave her some solace to refer to him her

difficulties, though the reference was but a caprice of the imagination. Numa's Egeria was no more; yet the poetic King learnt deep lore in her mystic grotto.

Captain Heath's second trouble—Lavington's threatened visit—came at the most awkward time possible. The bells were ringing for church. The little barber, who, I forgot to say, kept the post-office, had just shaved his last Sunday-morning customer. The folk were trooping up to the church-yard gate. Here and there might be seen gossiping groups of people who always came early to church, in order to have a pleasant chat with their neighbours. That splendidly-dressed lady is Mrs. Hall, the grocer's wife; her husband looks small by her side; very proud is he of the gorgeous silks and feathers with which he is able to decorate his magnificent mate. There goes Mr. Hebert, the rector, a quiet old bachelor,

who is said to like whist and port wine, who is known to preach short sensible sermons, and do all charity to those needing it: he shakes hands with Miss Hutchison: people often say the parson and she would be a good comfortable match—kind-hearted both of them, and good to the poor; but I suppose the notion never entered either head.

Captain Heath, close-buttoned, carrying his umbrella like a sword, looking every inch a formidable champion of the Church Militant, has just passed the closed doors of the saddler's shop, and is about to cross the Chessington road. A few yards behind come Walter Carey and his sister—Walter, the picture of an English yeoman, broad-shouldered and ruddy-faced, while Frances has a touch of unusual refinement in style, a mixture of humour and melancholy in her countenance, which would have prepared a Lavater for a character of no common type.

There was no Lavater in Avonside to scrutinize her beautiful calm face, and guess the secrets of the soul that swayed its expressions.

Just as Captain Heath was about to cross, the sharp blast of a horn rung through the air, and a dashing four-in-hand—three roans and a grey—came sharp round the Chesington Road corner, and pulled up in front of the “King’s Arms.” A couple of grooms were down at the horses’ heads that moment. A slight young man in a white coat, who sat behind, gave such a dissonant blast on the horn that the very church windows rattled. The driver, dressed in a bright blue coat, with fresh flowers in his button-hole, and wearing a blue veil on his white hat, threw down the reins, descended, and helped to descend a lady in charming travelling attire, who was on the box with him.

The scene was curious. The church-going

people all stood to see what was happening. A small mob gathered at the door of the barber's shop; another small mob on the pavement by the "King's Arms." A four-horse coach had not been seen in Avonside since the railway was opened.

Captain Heath, a man not readily frightened, would at this moment gladly have run away. He knew too well that this was Wyldote Lavington, M.P., and that the elegant lady on the box was Miss Ethel Clinton, of the Bagatelle Theatre. He did not want to see either of them just now; but he was obliged to move on, and he could not avoid walking into the enemy's camp.

"Ha, Heath!" said Lavington, "you're in the very nick of time. See, Miss Clinton has condescended to come down and see you—isn't it jolly of her? This is my cousin, Dick Wyldote. You ought to know

him! He's got an infallible martingale—breaks the bank everywhere.”

All this was said quite loudly to our unfortunate Captain, while decorous people passed along to church, and among them Walter and Frances.

“What curious people came on that coach, Walter,” she said, when they were beyond earshot. “Do you think they are friends of Captain Heath’s?”

Walter laughed.

“I daresay the old boy knows some odd people,” he said. “I wonder whether they’ll let him come to church.”

The bells had ceased. The organ was uttering its voice. The congregation had settled down, calmed by the stately music, and the dim religious light; but I fear a good many of them were allowing their fancy to wander to Wyldote Lavington’s four-in-hand. Captain Heath was not seen

in his high square pew, just opposite the pulpit.

No; Heath was in the quiet little parlour of the "King's Arms," in company with his friends; and Ethel Clinton was drinking champagne (Lavington never travelled without champagne), and singing fragments of song, slightly different from the holy hymn which arose in the church hard by. She had a gay yet mellow mezzo-soprano voice, and store of wild ballads, which Dick Wyldote turned into English from the German for her. Dick has three accomplishments—he can learn any language, play any instrument, and win at any game on the cards. She was carolling one of Dick's latest caprices:—

"Yes, we were laughing together,
Having our own sweet will,
All in the sunny weather,
Where the castle stands on the hill.

“Above the hilltops piny,
Dark with the fir and larch,
There was just a cloudlet tiny,
Set in the sky’s blue arch.

“He kissed me close, and I trembled,
With a shudder of sad despair—
For I felt, though he well dissembled,
He had kissed other lips elsewhere.

“He said, ‘I am true, true, true, love—
Sweet blossom of amorous youth!
I have never loved save you, love,
And the core of my heart is truth.’

“Ere his wicked words were ended,
That cloud grew black overhead,
And it burst, and the flame descended,
And struck the liar dead.”

“What a charming end to a love-story!”
said Lavington. “Don’t you think so,
Heath?”

“Give me some grapes,” said Miss Clinton.
“Singing makes me hoarse. So we kept
you from going to church, Captain Heath.
I am so sorry. When I am married I mean
to set a good example in that. I consider
it most important.”

"When you're married, Ethel, you'll be devilish respectable," said Dick Wyldote.

"Won't she?" quoth Lavington. "What did you think of my team, Heath?"

"They look an admirable match," said the Captain.

"We'll take them out this afternoon, if you've nothing better to do," said Lavington. "I used to know this country years ago, and I thought of staying here a few days, and exploring it. The landlord says he can put us up, if we don't mind roughing it; and Dick declares he'll sleep in a hayloft."

"There's nothing like your good sweet hay to sleep happily upon," quoth Dick. "Then you see the stars through the open door, and you've good company in the shape of an owl or a rat now and then."

Captain Heath felt relieved, for he feared that Lavington meant to turn his villa upside

down. Ready enough for dissipation abroad, the Captain liked regularity at home. Lavington had read his character with perfect accuracy; and, as his design was to remain in the Avonside neighbourhood for a week or so, he decided to stay at the inn.

When the morning service was over, Heath and Lavington were walking up and down the pavement, talking and smoking. Walter Carey came out alone. The Captain took the opportunity of introducing him to Lavington, and they chatted for some time.

"My friend Lavington will be here for a few days," said Heath. "Will you come to my house some day and dine? We haven't made any arrangements yet, but I know you don't stand upon etiquette."

"O, come and dine with me first, Mr. Carey—here, this evening, at the King's Arms. Don't say no; seven sharp. I want to show you that one may have as good a

dinner at a country inn like this as at a London club. You will come?"

"I will," said Carey, "though I fear you will be disappointed in your dinner. I'll come, to witness your disgust."

It was the custom of the substantial yeomanry who abound in that fertile Mesopotamia which lies between Avon and Severn, to dine at midday; but the Careys, who had inherited the habits of their father, were not so uncivilized. Sunday was an exception; on that day one was the dinner hour, so that all the servants might go to afternoon church—a regular institution in the neighbourhood. When Walter and Frances met at this meal, he told her he was going to dine with these new-comers, Captain Heath's friends.

"Why, Walter," she said, "what an odd thing to do on a Sunday! Couldn't you have asked them here some day? Fancy dining at that poky little inn with people you don't know!"

"Oh, Heath knows them well enough. As to asking them here, I shouldn't care to do that. They are not exactly the sort of people I should care to introduce to you."

"Then I am sure they are not fit for you to know," rejoined Frances. "I never can understand a gentleman caring to associate with people whom he would not introduce to his wife or his sisters."

"O," quoth Walter, in an off-hand way, "a woman decides such things without thinking. A man must see all sorts of people on business."

"Business on Sunday!" laughed Frances. "And that four-in-hand looked so very much like business! I suppose that gentleman who blows the horn so musically wanted to inform the village that he had something to sell."

"People like Mr. Lavington, who is a member of Parliament," said Walter, who felt he

was in a dilemma, "cannot always keep at home on Sundays." The Captain, to maintain his own respectability, which seemed likely to receive sore damage from this incident, had taken care to let Walter know his friend was the celebrated member for Scatterborough; and now Walter played the M.P. as a trump card, though too conscious that he had already stigmatized the whole party as disreputable.

"Ah, well," said Frances, unwilling to push her victory too far, "I hope you will get a good dinner. I shall walk over to the Hollies, and have a cup of tea with Miss Hutchison. She will be quite glad of a visitor."

"Glad to talk about that fellow Roland," said Walter, who was by this time thoroughly cross. "I wish you joy of your subject."

He got up and went off to smoke.

"Poor old Walter!" thought Frances.

“ I don’t half like his knowing these people. I am not rigidly Sabbatarian ; but a member of Parliament who comes driving four-in-hand, with a young person in brilliant attire on the box, and a horrid horn blowing, into a quiet village, when the church bells are ringing, can’t be much of a gentleman.”

CHAPTER X.

AT THE DOLPHIN.

ASTROLOGOS. "Would that I lived in the great age of alchemy,
 When to make gold from dross was nature's
 poetry ;
 This is the age of guineas and of guinea-pigs."
The Comedy of Dreams.

IN the village of Avonside there had been no events of importance for many generations. The place had its immemorial tradition ; it was confidently stated that in the days of Alfred the Great there was a college there, and that a famous Irish teacher, Dubshlaine, brought thousands of students, not from England only, but also from the chief realms of Europe. At intervals the

ploughmen on the West Hams found strange fragments of carven stone; and there had been remarkable coins dug up here and there; and occasionally rings and fibulæ had found their way from the Avonside cornfields to the Chessington Museum. The little place had its history; the same may be said of an immense number of English villages. Indeed the experienced antiquary knows that every inch of English ground deserves to be searched, since there is not an inch of English ground untraversed by race after race. The mysterious magnificent aborigines who built Stonehenge and Avebury; the Welsh; the Romans; the Scots; the Saxons, Jutes, Angles; the Danes; the Normans, last of all, so far as written history guides us. But of later years England has become the centre of the world; London, that market-magnet, which draws to itself all the most active forms of life, which

attracts genius, ambition, avarice, rascality, is the city of cities.

Avonside is now awakening from the repose of ages. It has had a murder—ay, and the murderer has escaped. This gives it a position in decided advance of the average hamlet. And now it has a mysterious four-in-hand, with a member of Parliament as driver, and a general air of wild extravagance and lavish expenditure. Lavington and his party were a delight to the villagers. They could not understand them a bit. Jacob Jones, who kept the King's Arms, and was much honoured by the Avonside folk because he weighed twenty stone, said that Mr. Lavington was a real gentleman. This became his definition in the village—for villages usually follow the example of the landlord of the chief inn, who can always dispense patronage in the form of two pennyworth of fourpenny ale. Laving-

on, M.P., was honoured by the Avonside people because he received honour from Jacob Jones, in whom they implicitly believed.

The talk at the barber's shop grew curiously significant. The little barber, who was also postmaster, was supposed to have sources of knowledge entirely his own, and did his best to justify this belief. So he invented a regular network of romance as to the sojourners at the King's Arms, and all his clients believed him, and looked with an emotion akin to terror on Wyldote Lavingston M.P., and his companions.

Terror, however, was not the emotion which Miss Ethel Clinton wished to inspire. She had come down to this quiet village, as she would herself have said, for a lark. She wanted to see that poor dear old Captain Heath again. She could make Lavingston do anything; she had last

season made him waste thousands on a spectacle play at one of the large theatres, just that she might show her superb limbs to larger audiences than the Bagatelle would hold. The money was gone, and Lavington did not grumble. Why should he? What is the use of making money by thousands unless you have spirit enough to throw it away by thousands also? This was Lavington's own feeling. It gave him as much delight to lose twenty thousand pounds as to make it. His brain was always vividly awake to methods of getting money fast, to methods of throwing it away fast. He was director of no end of companies for extracting gold from the best-promising sources, even as the Laputan philosopher extracted sunshine from cucumbers. Even if these companies came to grief, Mr. Lavington seemed somehow to profit; and as his daring genius came to be known, people would not

touch anything new unless they saw in the list of directors :

“Wyldote Lavington, Esq., M.P., F.R.G.S., &c.,
. . . Prince's Gate, and Lavington Manor, Bucks.”

He had come down to Avonside on this occasion to draw into his latest speculation Captain Heath, and any friend of Captain Heath's that seemed worth trying. Miss Ethel Clinton had similar ideas. She was getting somewhat tired of her *rôle* as an actress in leg parts. She found in Lavington “a generous patron of the drama :” but she was quite aware that he knew her thoroughly, and was not likely to fall a victim to her fascinations. Now Ethel began to think it was quite time for her to marry and settle : for, though she looked eighteen on the stage, and not much more than five-and-twenty off, she knew her actual years only too well. She felt strongly disposed towards Captain Heath, as a well-preserved

old aristocrat, who would make a most respectable husband : but, when she knew Walter Carey, she began to doubt whether he would not suit her best of the two. So she played one against the other with marvellous skill : and each laughed at the other's presumption : and there was quite a little comedy in progress, at which Lavington and his cousin Dick Wyldote laughed consumedly.

Frances was amazed and grieved to find her brother attracted and absorbed by these people, whom he described as unfit company for her. During the week that Lavington spent at Avonside, she saw very little of Walter. He was always with his new acquaintances. They did not come near Carey Farm, but she caught occasional glimpses of them driving about the neighbourhood. Frances herself drove a low pony-carriage, with an indefatigable little

Exmoor in it: and one day, as she was going to Chessington for a little shopping, she was overtaken by Lavington's drag— Ethel Clinton radiant beside the driver, in a marvellous costume of scarlet and amber. The equipage flashed by like a meteor, but she could see her brother in the second seat, leaning forward to speak to this brilliant creature. It made her shudder. She had an instinctive feeling that the woman she saw could only do her brother harm. She could not carry out her scheme with any pleasure. She felt as if her brother were lost to her: as if she were left alone. When the drag was out of sight, she turned her pony's head homeward, and gave up shopping for that day, at any rate.

Walter Carey, who knew his Horace, might have learnt therefrom to defy this temptress. He might have asked again the question—

"Lydia, dic, per omnes
Te Deos oro, Sybarin cur properes amando
Perdere?"

He was neglecting his oxen and his wheat-fields, his gardens and plantations, for this languishing London Lydia, who seemed to care quite as much for Captain Heath as for him. Alas, against feminine fascination warning from poet and philosopher comes alike in vain. We must all burn our own fingers.

The day came for Lavington to return to town. It was celebrated by a farewell dinner at the Royal Hotel, Chessington. It was a delightful moonlight night, and Lavington meant to start about midnight, on his way to London—resting a few hours at a famous roadside inn, the Dolphin, where he had engaged rooms. The dinner party consisted only of Miss Clinton, Lavington, his cousin, Heath, and Carey. They kept it up late, and grew

full of fun towards the end. Ethel Clinton, dark as midnight as to hair, eyebrows, eyes, eyelashes, was white all over with muslin and lace and pearls. Her olive cheeks were flushed with excitement. She was full of life.

A groom came in to say the drag was at the door.

"All right," quoth Lavington. "Keep the horses warm. Waiter, another bowl of punch."

"I'll make this one," said Dick Wyldote. "Green tea, waiter—lots of cinnamon—guava jelly—look alive!" and away he went to see that his orders were obeyed.

"I say, Heath," said Lavington, "you and Carey had better come on to the Dolphin with us. It's only twenty miles—and a lovely night—and there are always plenty of beds. What do you say?"

"Oh, do say yes, both of you," said the

Clinton, with a skilfully impartial smile, which each took to himself. "That will be charming. You must not refuse; I won't hear of it."

"I'll go," said Walter, who was in a very joyous state. "It's a lovely night. What do you say, Captain Heath?"

Of course the Captain was not to be beaten, so that was settled; and just at the right moment came in Dick Wyldote's bowl of punch, fragrant and fervent. As he ladled it forth with an antique silver spoon, he sang,

"This is the fluid
To keep you alive,
Made by the Druid
From elements five.

"Water the placid,
Sugar and spice,
Spirit and acid
Make the drink nice.

"Punch has like woman
Elements five;
She too keeps human
Creatures alive.

“Beauty’s own daughter,
Only too nice—
Calm as clear water,
Fragrant as spice.

“Sugar’s no sweeter,
Lemon’s less keen,
Spirit to beat her
Was never yet seen.”

“Stop your doggerel, Dick,” said Ethel,
“and serve the punch out in a more sensible
way. You hoot like an owl, and spill the
good liquor while you’re about it.”

The dinner came to an end. The bill was
paid. Lavington was steady as a rock when
he mounted the box, though he carried a
considerable quantity of wine and punch.
Miss Clinton could not be persuaded to
travel inside; no, her maid might do that,
and sleep all the way if she liked; *she* meant
to see the scenery by moonlight, and enjoy
the drive. So she was comfortably wrapped
up, and took her place by Lavington;
and Heath and Carey, an old fool and a

young fool, took their places behind them, jealous of each other; and Dick Wyldote blew his horn; and off they dashed over the petrified kidneys with which Chessington is paved.

The chill night air sobered the travellers somewhat. It made Ethel Clinton sleepy; so Walter Carey, who was immediately behind her, had the delightful duty of leaning forward to support her, with his arm around her waist. He got very cramped and chilly, but he consoled himself with the thought of his supreme felicity. We must not be too hard on this young man. He had never seen much of London; Miss Clinton was to him a new variety of the human race; he thought her the Arabian phoenix of her sex. He will be disenchanted in good time, but just now let us pity him, and not laugh at him. Who was your first love, gentle reader? A milkmaid, a lady's maid, a young

person at the pastrycook's? Whoever has any imagination finds beauty somewhere, even though no one else can see it ; and the great gift of imagination, though it too often tortures and sometimes maddens its possessors, is worth all other gifts of God.

Lavington had no imagination that night, or indeed at any other time. It was just as well. He concentrated himself on his horses, and contrived to race through the twenty miles in about a hundred minutes. Every body was glad when the lights of the Dolphin were visible, as they pulled up at the end of a long incline. The place looked cheerful. Lavington's arrangements had ensured perfect preparation. Walter Carey, cramped and cold, was glad to spring to the ground, and lifted down Ethel Clinton before she was half awake. The Captain, stiffer-jointed, descended with more difficulty. Dick Wyldote blew a ghostly note or

two from his horn. It was pleasant to get into a comfortable room with a blazing fire, and ample refreshment on the table.

"O dear," said Ethel, kneeling on the hearthrug, and warming her white fingers, "isn't this nice? I hope it's not a dream."

It was no dream, but dreams soon followed it; for everybody was tired with the night drive, and even Dick Wyldote had not energy enough to break out into his usual ebullitions of nonsense. What a treat it is to thoroughly rest after a long drive or ride! I wonder which of the present company slept most tranquilly? The palm probably lies between Ethel Clinton and Lavington, neither of whom had an iota of conscience.

Walter Carey, at any rate, could not sleep. He had a cosy old oak-panelled bed-room, with a splendid wood fire, which threw a pleasant light on two or three pictures, so

ancient that their subjects were scarce discernible. So tired was Walter that he threw off his clothes hastily, and jumped into bed with a full expectation of being asleep in two minutes ; but the first plunge between the sheets seemed to awaken him thoroughly, and he lay watching the changeful firelight as it flickered on carved black oak and mysterious canvas. Walter Carey was not quite at ease. Selfish as he was, he had a real liking for his sister ; he had also a respect for her pure and stable character ; and even here, alone, with the echo of recent revelry in his brain, he had an uneasy dissatisfied feeling. This Miss Clinton, radiant in apparel and gay in manner, was very fascinating, but she was of quite a different species from Frances. This he saw clearly enough. The Clinton was a painted butterfly, a chattering parroquet ; his mind's eye pictured his sister in the Carey Farm gardens, pos-

sessed by a serene gaiety, delighting in song of bird and colour of flower, yet able to converse on the choicest subjects wisely and well. *Vera incessu patuit Dea*. There was no mistaking the true lady in the society of Frances Carey. Her brother felt that he did her wrong by his intercourse, harmless though it might seem, with Lavington's sparkling *Bohémienne*.

Unable to sleep, Walter Carey tumbled out of bed, lighted a cigar, threw logs upon the fire, and thought over his position. He had been unexpectedly betrayed into a new phase of life, wholly unnatural to him; he began to think that he was making a mistake to leave, even for so short a time, his land, his cattle, his hearth, his Horace, his sister. He did not feel any remorse, exactly; it was rather a selfish reaction. He began to consider whether he was not happier in his old regular method of life than when run-

ning after a black-haired Siren, and driving about with a fast M.P. It would be hard to conceive a life that could yield more solid satisfaction than Carey's. A comfortable estate, healthy occupation, a charming companion in his sister. He ought to have been the last man to run off at a tangent. As he sat smoking and meditating through a sleepless night, this idea impressed itself on him.

Still wide awake was he when the dawn gradually broke, filling the east with mountains of miraculous colour, which were reflected in the west. A myriad of birds broke into song as the first level sunshafts came from the horizon. Walter Carey sprang up, dipped his head in icy water, dressed rapidly. Then he went down to the stables, where he was well known, ordered out a horse, and rode rapidly homewards, leaving neither note nor message for Laving-

ton or Heath. He did not keep to the road, but went straight across country, whereby he saved a matter of four miles, riding into the yard of Carey Farm at about his usual breakfast-hour.

Walter Carey was now and then kept away all night at distant fair or market; and, as there were men-servants in the house, Frances was not alarmed by his unexpected absence. But on this occasion there was neither fair nor market; moreover, a rumour reached her through Rachel that he had gone away with Mr. Lavington. This rumour was brought in after midnight by a waggoner who slept in the house, and who came in late through Avonside village, after delivering a load some miles away. As his four sturdy horses went with jingling bell down the street, he had caught sight of Mr. Lavington's coach, with bright-burning lamps, and his master with his foot on

the axle of the near wheel. He came chilly, and hungry, and thirsty into the farm kitchen, and told what he had seen, in a state of perplexed wonder ; and Rachel, who was hurrying the serving-folk to bed, caught his story with quick ears.

When the waggoner had finished a vast hunch of bread and cheese, and a foaming quart of beer, he stumbled up the creaking back-stairs. Then Rachel went to her mistress, who was sitting by the dying embers of a wood fire, and trying to read the *Tempest*. She could not. The volume lay idly in her lap, and her dark blue eyes looked intently into the depths of the fire, which now and then threw up a sudden jet, bringing out the golden tinge that lay hidden in the rich brown hair. She sat in an old-fashioned crimson elbow-chair : her shapely head, whose curves showed gentleness and strength, rested upon her hand.

Her thoughts were drawn far away from Prospero's haunted isle by a stronger magician than Prospero—her own imagination. She thought of her isolated position. While her father lived she had always a friend to whom she could tell what seemed the silliest troubles : but Walter had never had the slightest touch of that feminine sympathy. All men of the highest manliness have also some womanliness. Frances thought rather reproachfully of the way in which she had treated Hugh Roland : that he loved her, she knew, though he had never ventured to say it : she knew indeed that with a look from her—which the cruel creature never gave—love's words would have leaped to his lips. Such cruelty recoils. She would gladly now have grasped his loyal hand, have met the gaze of his earnest eyes.

Rachel came up from the kitchen, having heard the waggoner's last creaking upon the stairs.

"It's no use waiting up, miss," she said. "Mr. Walter's gone off on a drive, so Tom Tull says, with them new-fangled folk that drives four horses. I wonder at him, but gentlefolk have strange ways."

Frances was very quiet while she heard this. Watching only too anxiously her brother's sudden vagary, she was also anxious not to betray her watchfulness even to Rachel. I suspect the loyal old servant saw through her young mistress, yet pretended not to see.

"I shall sit up a little longer, Rachel," said Miss Carey. "Your master will soon be back."

"I hope so, miss. But I don't half like those people. The servants say strange things about them. They seem to drink and smoke and play cards all night. And as to that young woman, why, I believe she's no better than she should be."

"Few of us are," said Frances.

"O, you may say that, miss, but I know better. Your poor dear father, he used beautiful language; and I'm sure if I ever talk properer than some people, it's because I used to listen to him; and he said of a young woman that dressed dreadful fine, that she was Mary Trishus. Now I'm sure this creature belongs to the Trishus family, though her name perhaps ain't Mary."

Frances was compelled to laugh. That Ethel Clinton was meritricious, she had no doubt, but she did not at first recognise Rachel's way of putting it. She said:

"We need not trouble ourselves about her, Rachel. I dare say we shall never see or hear of her again."

"I don't know, miss. Them cattle ain't so easy to get rid of. They're like the catwampuses you see about harvest time—they fly quite pretty in the air, but, O my

gracious, don't they sting ! You smart and itch for a month after."

The comparison of this radiant young companion of the M.P. to a "catawampus," rather amused Frances. Rachel resumed :

"Those sort of people are mischievious. They're just like wapses, that sting you for something to do. They prove to me, miss, that men are very inferior to us women."

"How is that, Rachel?"

"Why, they take in the very cleverest men; and there isn't one among them that ever took in a woman. They might as well try to put salt on a bird's tail. I know I was never took in with any of the young hussies myself. I know them when I see them. As poor dear master used to say, I'm a woman of great perspirasity."

"You seem to have studied the subject, Rachel."

"I don't hold with too much study, Miss

Frances, but I keeps my eyes open ; and if you learn nothing through observasions from sixteen to sixty, why, then, the sooner you shuts up the better. And if that dressed-out young woman is so uncommon fascinatious to Mr. Walter, why didn't he take you on his arm with proper ceremonius to call upon her ?”

“I do not care to meet strangers,” replied Frances, “and, besides, you know, Rachel, my brother may know many people to whom he would not like to introduce me.”

“Ay,” said Rachel, with a sniff of contempt: “they think because they are men they are privilegious to break all the Commandments except them that it's no trouble to keep. Please God,” she added piously, “that he won't be making Mrs. Walter Carey of that painted doll.”

“No, Rachel, he'll never do that.”

“Well, miss, if you ask me has he made

propositions to her, I can say with truth not to my knowledge : but when a man begins to be foolish he never knows where to stop."

" I thought it was Captain Heath she was trying to captivate," said Frances.

" They do say that the Captain is wonderful took up with her. The servants at Heathfield have been telling our servants that the Captain spends a longer time than ever a-brushing and a-polishing up of a morning, and that his man Mr. Boyd has a pretty time of it. And the young woman have been over to look at the house, and told the Captain he should build a wing to it, as the rooms are small. She gave the servants a fine lot of money, and the old cook, who should have knowed better, remarked that she must be a real lady. ' Lady!' says I to her. ' Why, even that fine name she has I don't believe is her own.' For you know, miss, they always

chooses fine names. I'm thankful I've got a good honest name, which ain't likely to tempt any of them. But there, miss, I've no right to be pollutiating your young ears with such things."

"Perhaps she is really going to marry the Captain," said Frances, who was amused with Rachel's chatter.

"Lord, miss, I shall pity the Captain if he do marry her! I consider him a most contemptuous old man, but I would not wish him married to that person."

"Well, she would not be a very pleasant addition to Avonside society, Rachel: but no doubt the Captain will think of marrying again, now that he is alone."

"Ah, miss, do you know I sometimes think Mr. Stephen might not be dead, after all."

"What makes you think so?" said Frances, suddenly interested.

"I don't quite know, miss, but I have a presentation about it. You see, they never got at the truth; that mightn't have been his body. Mr. Roland never would say nothing about it, and I think there's some mystery in it. Poor young gentleman, he must have been terrible unhappy amongst those roaring lunacious people. I'm so glad he's got away. I wonder where he is! But I dare say we shall see him some day, and it will all come right," said the old servant, seeing that her young mistress looked sad.

"Now I don't think we need wait any longer," said Frances; "we had better make the most of a short night. O, by the way, will you mend my dress in the morning before I put it on? There are a few stitches wanting at the pocket."

"Why, miss, your pockets are always torn now. I have been mending one to-day. One would think you carried a bag of gold in your pocket."

"Ah!" thought Frances, "she little suspects that I do. She is a good old creature, and will be useful in any emergency."

It was a long time before Frances could sleep. She kept wondering what reason Rachel had for thinking Stephen Heath was not dead. The thought had often occurred to her, but she could see no reason for Stephen's keeping out of the way. She had heard it whispered about that he was a good deal in debt, but she did not think that a sufficient reason for his going away, and she thought he could not be wicked enough, if he were alive, to allow Hugh to be accused of murder. And then she wondered why Walter hadn't come home: and found herself comparing Walter with his father, and thinking he never would be so noble a man. Then she compared him with Hugh. "But why do I always come back to Hugh?" she said to herself, and tried once more to sleep.

When the party at the Dolphin came down to breakfast, somewhere about twelve o'clock, Walter Carey's abrupt defection was of course discovered. Lavington was amazed, having hoped to attract him to London, and bleed him. Your country gentleman is so easily intoxicated by the rapid way in which Londoners make money. The Clinton was disgusted, having decided that he was perhaps more manageable than Captain Heath, and at least as eligible. Heath himself was very angry: called Carey's behaviour ungentlemanly; swore he would cut him dead!

"Never mind," said Lavington. "We'll have our fun without caring for that miserable milksop. I never thought much of him: he's a mere country boor. You'll come on to town with us, won't you, Heath?"

"Of course he will," said Miss Clinton,

who had taken a flower from a vase, and was fastening it into the Captain's coat. "I would never forgive him else."

The Captain succumbed, sent to Avon-side for a portmanteau, went townward with Lavington and his feminine friend. A very short time saw him established in rooms in Jermyn Street, where also Lavington and Dick Wyldote were living. As to Ethel Clinton, she is princess of a Fulham villa, on whose lofty garden walls grow peaches to perfect ripeness.

As Walter Carey rode into his precinct, he looked up toward his sister's window. She stood there watching him, and gave him a loving sisterly smile. She had just "wanton'd in the luxury of splash," and looked as fresh as a rosebud after dew, or a snowflake this instant fallen. As Walter caught his sister's eye, he felt thankful for his last impulse.

CHAPTER XI.

GABRIEL SHIRLEY'S COTTAGE.

"Let rogues be fixed who have no habitation :
A gentleman may wander."

AFTER a long sleep, sorely needed, Hugh Roland arose refreshed, and dressed himself, and came out into the passage. The front door was open, and Mr. Shirley was pacing up and down the gravel, his hands clasped behind him, meditative. He turned quickly when he heard Hugh's step.

"Ha, my young friend, you have had refreshing slumber. I know you have, for once or twice I looked upon you, and your sleep was not that of a murderer. Yet I

suppose it must be on my part contempt of court to say this, seeing that you have been labelled murderer and maniac by a jury. As the illustrious poet hath it :

‘ After the well-fee’d counsel’s sound and fury,
I hail the wisdom of an unpaid jury.’

No, you must be guilty, but that need not prevent your wearing another suit of clothes. My man, Mark Chapman, the father of the little maid that spreads my table, is about your size, and he has just purchased a new and splendid suit of apparel, in which he intends to array himself on Sunday. But I have impounded them for you, and he must revisit his tailor. Of their material I only know that the trousers are corduroy, which I believe never wears out. As the illustrious poet says :

‘ Cloth for the hind’s hind part’s so mean a thing,
Why is it dedicated to the king ?’ ”

Hugh Roland was willingly obedient to

Gabriel Shirley's behest. He felt that he had found a friend. It was indeed for him a most fortunate thing that he had reached this quiet haven, otherwise I know not what mischance might have happened to him. When he accepted his comrade's offer to escape, he had no definite idea of the future; and he would assuredly have run right into the arms of the police, and been taken back to the Asylum, with closer superintendence thereafter.

Clad in Mark Chapman's "requisitioned" habiliments, Hugh might have passed muster as a keeper of unusual intelligence. Mr. Shirley did not at first encourage him to talk of his affairs; on the contrary, he talked of his own. He took his guest over his little demesne. The quaint one-storied cottage stood in about three acres of ground, palisaded off from a wide common. There was no other habitation in sight, and the common

itself seemed boundless on every hand. Mr. Shirley's ground was admirably cultivated, and not an inch ran to waste. He showed Hugh his asparagus and strawberry beds, his poultry and pigeons, his cleanly pigstyes, with pardonable pride. Hugh, a lover of country work, and specially of gardening, was delighted.

"It is all Mark's doing," said Mr. Shirley. "He likes it. I am seldom here above three months in the year, and Mark has it all his own way. Look at that game-cock—isn't he a beauty?"

Gabriel Shirley desired to get Hugh quite at ease, and his brain in a state of equipoise, before talking of either his past or his future, so he would not hear of a word on personal matters that first day.

"Time enough, my young friend. Dismiss your cares, and your brain will grow clear and steady. Do you like my cottage?"

“I do, indeed !”

“I built it on this common by permission of the lord of the manor, whose acquaintance I made on Mount Athos. We were both hunting for manuscripts in the monasteries. He was lost to his family at that time—his father thought him dead ; but he came back and married, and settled down quietly. I wanted a lonely spot to come to, when tired of wandering ; so he gave me this, for which I pay a yearly quit-rent of a game capon and two pullets. What I like here is the apparent want of limit. I know where I should find myself if I walked a mile or two north or south, east or west ; but as I cannot see the wood southward, or the river to the east which receives this noisy brook, I practise self-delusion, and imagine scenes of romance beyond. A poet, who would probably have been the greatest in the world, if sanity had been among his gifts, says well ;

‘I love all waste
And solitary places ; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be.’

I contrive to gratify this feeling even on an English common.”

They had passed out on the common by this time. The clear stream, green with its watercress, that came through Mr. Shirley's garden, delayed in pools of crystal. Two very fine jackasses, one grey and the other brown, were browsing on the turf, and came up to the old gentleman in a friendly familiar manner. He scratched their shaggy poles, and smoothed the mystic crosses on their backs.

“What fine animals!” quoth Hugh, who was beginning to forget his own troubles in his entertainer's eccentricities—which was exactly what the kind old gentleman desired.

“I admire the horse,” said Mr. Shirley,

"but I love the ass. He is such a wise and friendly creature. They understand him in Asia better than we do in Europe. Which of the quadrupeds do you consider the most intelligent?"

"Either the dog or the horse, I should have said."

"It lies between these four—dog, horse, ass, elephant. I consider the ass first, elephant second, dog third."

"I should not have thought it," said Hugh. "Why is the donkey the type of stupidity?"

"*Lucus a non*, perhaps. The donkey in England has fallen into bad hands, and become the victim of human stupidity. As the illustrious poet says :

'God made the world for man to rule: and man
Is bound to finish that which God began.'

You don't read modern philosophy, I suppose, Mr. Roland?"

"What little I have read seemed either silly or unintelligible : so I gave it up, under the impression that it needed a keener intellect than mine. I read one day in a book by a famous writer that the human eye is so badly made that if it had been done by a common optician it would have been sent back with severe censure. When I found a philosophical gentleman criticizing God in that way, I shut the book, being very certain he was much too clever for me to follow."

The old gentleman laughed.

"I think you were right. When the fluent professor uses this argument, he forgets that it is capable of other applications. May not the Omnipotent Artificer have worked too carelessly elsewhere—perhaps have given the fluent professor a brain not quite as well made as brains ought to be?"

As they were talking, the maid, who

had earned Hugh's gratitude by her prompt kindness that morning, came tripping to the garden-gate and gave a call. Instantly the grey donkey came to her, walked after her to the rear of the cottage, and shortly reappeared, harnessed to a light cart. The girl drove away across the common.

"That's a useful child," said the old gentleman. "Her name is Carolina : her father calls her Carry : so I always call her Fetch—she has so much fetching and carrying to do. She is gone now to get us some dinner. I want some stewed eels, and they are generally to be got at any of the riverside villages. Our rivers are famed for them : there are none fit to eat in the Nile or the Amazon."

"You seem to have travelled very much," said Hugh Roland.

"I have walked through half the world. I come of a wandering family. My ances-

tor, Antony Shirley, first brought coffee to England from Aleppo. O I could tell you as wild stories as Munchausen, and some of them truer than his. As the illustrious poet sayeth :

‘ Travellers’ true tales too often may be told,
But fresh-invented stories grow not old.’ ”

Some days passed before Mr. Shirley gave Hugh any encouragement to speak of his own affairs : and, when he did, it was with a warning to think calmly.

“ Recall the events of that night,” he said. “ Think over them carefully. You were excited ; but the excitement is past now, and if you search your memory you will be able to realize what occurred. It is impossible that you could have killed a man nearly as strong as yourself, after a hideous struggle, and that every trace of it should perish from your memory. Wherefore I say go out on the common, and sit under a tree,

and think over for yourself the events of that night. I don't want this for my own satisfaction. I want you to thoroughly realize all that happened. If you can manage a continuous narrative of your adventures, it may some day be of vast service, in case of any further inquiry into the night's events."

This excellent counsel Hugh Roland followed, and in time found it possible to account for the whole of his time between Carey Farm and the Hollies. He went over the incidents of the night with Mr. Shirley, who carefully cross-examined him, and who felt quite certain that his first impression of Hugh's innocence was correct.

"Yours is a case," he said, "in which there is no appeal to the law. You must believe that God acts wisely and lovingly in giving you this trouble to bear. You must wait patiently for the truth to be revealed. Can you be patient?"

"It would be easier if my grief were solitary."

"Is it no solace to think that you have a friend who is sorry for you? Who is he? Can you not communicate with him safely? Surely he will not betray you."

The crafty old gentleman knew full well that Frances was the friend to whom Hugh referred; and Hugh soon told him all about it, with a fine frantic frenzy.

"O if I could but see her for an instant, in the dear old garden where we have met so many a time! Don't you think I might see her, Mr. Shirley? I could be happy after that, and settle down to some sort of work—for of course I must do some work, if I can only get any to do, without being found out."

"Leave that question for the present," said Gabriel Shirley. "Remember, I know your lady-love. We have conversed. I

admire her beauty, her calm, her courtesy. Now what say you? Shall I leave you here for a day or two, and make a pilgrimage to the shrine of your fair saint, and prepare her to see you?"

"O," cried Hugh, so suddenly that the donkey stopped grazing, and looked at him with mild surprise, "that will indeed be kind. How fortunate I have been to meet you! I begin to hope."

"Always hope, my young friend. Hope is the motive power of existence. As the illustrious poet hath it:

'Hope is the fire that the Forethinker stole;
Hope is the breath of man's immortal soul.'

I will set out to-morrow, and see the lady. She will receive me with that lovely courtesy which belongs to one who is born a queen. You, meanwhile, remain here; ramble over the common; tranquilly collect your thoughts. In your case it is above all

things requisite to be wholly cool and calm."

"I will try," said Hugh. "It is very hard sometimes."

"Nothing that is easy is worth doing. Every man has his labours of Hercules to perform. Do not think yours is the worst of all troubles."

"I will not," said Hugh "having found so kind a friend. Yet it is hard to think of myself in base hiding, for no fault of my own."

"Do not be sure there is no fault of your own. Examine that matter. Cause and effect are not always so closely allied that you can at once discover their connexion. Perhaps, being conscious that you loved this lady, you were too slow to ask her."

"She is too good for me," cried Hugh, in lover-like enthusiasm, "or for anybody in the world."

“Ah,” said Mr. Shirley, meditatively,
“what are the words of the illustrious poet?

‘She melts all hearts, though made of flint or granite;
She was intended for a better planet.’”

Mr. Gabriel Shirley, when he started on an expedition, had the habit of going off very early in the morning. Hugh Roland proposed to walk a few miles with him; so, just before sunrise, having eaten a hearty country breakfast, they started together over the dewy grass. The stars were gradually fading. A fiery lance sprang from the utter East, discomfiting the bank of grey and gloomy cloud. Other weapons from the armoury of light flashed through the sky; and the morning star perished into cloudless blue; and the mist withered away from the full-foliaged trees. There was an oratorio of birds. The lark sprang skyward with his delicious solo; while the robins chanted in every bush, and merle and mavis broke into

mellow song amid the dimmer copses, and deep in the woodland the quoist cooed melodiously. For when they came to the edge of the common, a fringe of ancient beech-wood lay below; and through those beeches, giants of immemorial growth, they followed a downward, winding path, till they reached a quiet sedgy pool, on the further side whereof was a solitary cottage—the first human habitation they had seen. Its inhabitants were astir, for a thin blue smoke rose straight into the windless air from its chimney. As they reached the edge of the pool, a frightened flotilla of moorfowl dived beneath the brown water.

“Here let us part,” said Gabriel Shirley, planting his staff sturdily on the ground, and standing still for a moment. “Go back to my little cottage and wait. Curb all impatience, and trust me to do the best I can for you.”

"I trust you entirely," said Hugh. "I know you are a true friend. I am too grateful to try to thank you."

"Thanks are needless," said Shirley, with a humorous smile. "What I am doing is for my own pleasure. I am in love with Miss Frances Carey's beautiful face and soft sweet voice . . . and I go to Avonside only to see how lovely she will look when she hears glad tidings. As the illustrious poet hath it :

'News from her love her happy heart will stir,
So that she almost loves the messenger.'

Go back, Hugh—ponder what I have said."

They parted. The stalwart old man tramped along the edge of the pool, never looking back, and was soon lost to sight. Hugh Roland slowly reascended the path through the beech-wood, carpeted with leaves of many Autumns. When he emerged from that remnant of ancient forest, and

was on the table-land of the common, he felt as if he were back again in a realm that belonged to Gabriel Shirley only. There is a time in the life of a man when his character crystallizes. The chemist mixes acid and alkali, and sets them in a shallow saucer. After awhile, with what seems miraculous suddenness, crystals shoot in all directions, all of one shape, all of one colour. So with the spirit of man. It is formless and aqueous, till some shaping power descends upon it. Hugh Roland, born to a moderate competency, had never cared for a career. His love for Frances would have ripened his character in time; but his sudden terrible misfortune, and his acquaintance with Mr. Gabriel Shirley, hastened the process. He began to think seriously on the problem of life; he decided that a man could never be happy except by the full exercise of his faculties.

“God is happy,” he thought, “because He keeps the universe moving. I will try to keep my small share of the universe moving also.”

As Hugh Roland approached the cottage which was now his home, he saw two forms crossing the common. To see any creature pass in that neighbourhood was most unusual. He was long-sighted; he clearly perceived, though at a considerable distance, that these two persons were not in the attire of the common Englishman. It suddenly flashed on him that they were policemen. They were going straight towards Mr. Shirley's cottage. Hugh, feeling a dire dread that they were in search of him, threw himself down into a wild growth of coppice, with just one ash-tree in the midst of it, and awaited events, keeping watch through a natural loophole. The two men entered Mr. Shirley's cottage. He saw them walk

up to the door, which Carry opened. He tried to imagine what they were saying to her—what she replied. Very close he lay amid the bracken, when he saw them turn away from the cottage and walk towards his hiding-place, as straight as if they knew he was there. But they passed, undiscerning, and he heard a few words of their talk.

“They’re nowhere in this direction,” said one of them ; “they have got abroad, I expect.”

“Of course they have. They’re too cunning to stay about here. I don’t believe either of them was mad ; they pretend it, to get off. Why, you’ve only to murder somebody, or sham mad, to be provided for all your life. It’s as good as a little fortune.”

“I shouldn’t much care to be provided for in that way. What a pity that queer old gentleman wasn’t at home ! We should have got a glass of good ale.”

“He doesn’t trust that little maid with the key of the beer, I guess.”

Something of this sort reached Hugh Roland in his hidingplace, and made him particularly thankful when the two policemen passed out of sight into the great beechwood. He did not move for full ten minutes after they had disappeared. The feeling that comes upon a man who, though consciously innocent, is by error convicted of crime, is not easily endurable. He is outcast and outlaw. Every man’s hand is against him. In many cases an innocent man is driven wild by such a situation, and does something which compromises him for ever. That Hugh Roland took matters easily was due to two people . . . Frances Carey and Gabriel Shirley. Left to himself, he would never have been able to bear his great trouble so calmly. But he had perpetually before him the vision of Frances, whose

tranquil spiritual beauty came more strongly upon him in her absence. It is often so with the true lover. In his lady's presence he is too eager and passionate to discern or analyze all the small separable delights which blend into one perfect beauty, like the rainbow's seven immortal colours into the white light of life.

Now Hugh Roland thought of Frances as the lady of ladies; he remembered, now that he dared not look upon her eyes, the marvellous language they had. Perhaps she was not such a wonder, after all, as poor Hugh fancied her; but the fact stands that he did deem her a wonder of women, that he thought of her in all his thinking hours, that his idea of Frances elevated him above his ordinary self, and made him feel heroically resolved to bear his troubles nobly. There were times when he looked rebelliously at the mischance he was compelled to endure.

He railed at the unfair Fates, who had dealt him so heavy a blow as the permanent destruction of his liberty. But there were other days—sunshiny days of soft south wind—when he felt the goodness of God through his trouble and trial. God is very close to the worst of his creatures in the worst of his troubles. Hugh Roland became in time thankful for his suffering; he remembered his past self—buoyant, defiant, reckless; he saw that the penance he was enduring was better far for him than freedom and pleasure. When a man recognizes the kindness of God's punishments, and begins to ask why they are inflicted, there is good hope of him.

Let us leave Hugh in his solitude, thinking over his strange situation, and follow Mr. Gabriel Shirley. He was just in his humour. To him life was always a drama, and he was the chief spectator—chief actor he never de-

sired to be. He liked to see comedy or tragedy gradually evolve itself. On the present occasion it seemed to him that a very curious tragi-comedy was in course of development. He had fully decided that Hugh Roland was no murderer, but he saw with perfect clearness the utter impossibility of proving this, and he wanted to extricate Hugh from his trouble. He heartily pitied the boy. Trouble of this sort, which to a man of forty seems almost ludicrous, is a very heavy trial to the youngster just entering the world. Gabriel Shirley, feeling this deep pity for Roland, determined to do his best for him. So he tramped a good many miles in sunshine and shade, till he again reached Avonside. To him solitary walking had no weariness. A wide experience of men and books supplied him with inexhaustible themes for thought; and, moreover, he was an attentive spectator of

"The admirable drama of small things,"

enacted in every hedge-row, every water-pool—in the caprices of wind-driven sun-stained clouds. He held to the full the opinion of Coleridge that—

"In nature there is nothing melancholy."

At the same time he was always ready to hold converse with anyone whom he met on his wanderings; was indeed as genial and companionable as the immortal author of *Barnabae Itinerarium* himself; often found wit and wisdom in queer corners. He was wont to say, in the words of his favourite gnostic bard :

"The sweetest nut will have the roughest husk :
The primeest boar will have the toughest tusk."

Between the common on which stood Mr. Shirley's cottage and our pleasant village of Avonside there was about two days' tramp. The famous old pedestrian went on valiantly, through highway and byway, field-path and wood-path, asking his way sometimes, but

relying chiefly on his pocket-map and the little compass that hung at his watch-chain. At a country inn or two he took refreshment, and, not being a Good Templar, or a descendant of Rechab, disdained not a glass of ale—and was fortunate in that he was traversing a country where ale is home-brewed. Nor did he disdain a lift: the old gentleman looked quite at home on the edge of a waggon with four well-harnessed horses, that trotted gaily homeward after delivering a load of wheat, tossing their handsome heads to the music of their merry bells, while the waggoner, in olive-green smock-frock, told our friend all he knew about the neighbourhood, and was exceeding eloquent of his master and his master's daughter. The master was General Sir Charles Wray, who had retired from service to live on his estate, and kept the home-farm in his hands for amusement.

"The best master about here," says the enthusiastic waggoner. "Good to man and beast, he is. Look at them beasties: why, they are as well cared for as if they were Christians. But he's a melancholy man, the General: he's never been happy since his wife died, and that was when Miss Cecilia was born: and they say Miss Cecilia is so like her mother he can hardly bear to look at her."

"We torture ourselves," said Gabriel Shirley, rather as a soliloquy. "As the illustrious poet hath it:

'Man for himself makes many weary hours,
Doubling the dire doom of the fateful Powers.'

"Your honour talks very fine," quoth the waggoner, "and I think if the General could hear you it would do him good. Won't you go in and look at the house? Strangers are always welcome to go over the chief rooms, and there are some rare curosities."

As the waggoner made this suggestion, they reached the great farm-gates, and Mr. Shirley dismounted.

"There's a lodge only just round the corner," said the man, "if your honour would like to go in."

It was Gabriel Shirley's practice never to waste an opportunity. He had heard of General Sir Charles Wray, and also of Monckton Manor; and he was curious about both the man and the place. So he followed the stalwart waggoner's advice, passed the lodge, and walked along a wide gravel path which bounded a level green lawn to the front door of the house, a stately Elizabethan place, with wings at right angles to the front, and a lofty clock-tower right in the centre. The great door stood open, and servants were in waiting: and when Mr. Shirley said that he had been told he might see the house, he was taken through the

rooms with complete courtesy. There was much worth seeing, but to describe what an English gentleman's house contains is to go over well-known ground : Gabriel Shirley found his greatest pleasure in the library, which contained a splendid collection of rare books and ancient illuminated manuscripts.

In the library he saw its owner, a tall erect white-haired man, dressed entirely in black velvet, wearing knee-breeches, and black silk stockings, and shoes with buckles of diamond, and pacing up and down with an abstracted look, as if his thoughts were in that land which is very far off. His long thin white right hand clutched something imaginary now and then : was it his sword ? —and was he dreaming of battles fought long ago, when he, a prince of swordsmen, had cut his way through the dark scowling faces of England's foes ? So magnetic was

this sorrow-stricken kind-hearted old soldier that Gabriel Shirley could not take his gaze from him. The illuminated page beneath his eye, where some monk, many a year ago, had drawn a sad Madonna amid birds and flowers, faded into nonentity beside this living poem of grief.

Gabriel Shirley, a man daring yet gentle, made a sudden resolve to speak to Sir Charles Wray. So, rising, he approached him, and said :

“I have to thank you, General Sir Charles Wray, for the unusual courtesy which permits a stranger to inspect your priceless and peerless collections. I have received intense pleasure from my visit. I pray you to pardon me, but, as the illustrious poet has it,

‘Imperfect utterance is our saddest taint,
And, when our hearts grow full, our lips grow faint.’”

Sir Charles Wray, awakening slowly from his reverie as this stately speech fell

upon his ear—slowly, as smoke-wreaths ascend in a calm atmosphere—turned his eye upon the speaker. Then he said :

“Mr. Gabriel Shirley, I think?”

“That is my name,” said Shirley; “but I am surprised that you should know me.”

“Ah,” replied Sir Charles, “life is full of coincidences. You travelled in Asia Minor with Count Cassius Grimani. He took your photograph in the Troad. He gave me a copy. Yours is a face not easily forgotten. I have the picture now.”

“I am honoured,” said Gabriel Shirley, with a smile. “As the illustrious poet hath it :

‘Portraits are flatteries : ah, why portray
The ancient gentleman whose hair is gray?’”

“You must stay and dine with me, Mr. Shirley,” said the General. “Will you sleep here, and see the place in the morning? I am quite alone. My daughter is

spending the day with the Vicar, who was her tutor, and taught her lots of things young ladies seldom know."

"I shall be happy to accept your invitation to dine, Sir Charles," said Mr. Shirley; "but I am on a mission which demands promptitude, and I want to sleep at Monckton St. Mary to-night."

"I can send you on," said Sir Charles. "It is only five miles."

"With your permission I will walk," said Mr. Shirley. "I like walking at night; and there is a moon. Sleep comes to me more gratefully when I have walked a few easy miles. The evening air, when the sky is

'Clothed in the beauty of a million stars,'
seems to tranquillize the spirit."

"I know nothing that will tranquillize the spirit when burdened with a great grief. People tell me I ought not to grieve for the

loss of a young wife twenty years ago, and I doubt not it is a most foolish thing, but I cannot help it."

"It is not wise," said Gabriel. "There is no death : there is only change. I have heard—pardon me if I speak too freely—that your lovely daughter's likeness to her mother troubles you. It should rather be a solace, as showing the immortal power of her mother's spirit. As the illustrious poet hath it :

'What we call life is twilight : when 'tis done,
A door is opened, and we see the sun.'

The result of this conversation was that the General and Gabriel Shirley dined together pleasantly, and talked together carefully. Shirley, a student of character, did his best to arouse his companion from his curious lethargy; and he so far succeeded that, when they sat down to walnuts and port, the General grew more cheerful.

"*Semel in anno ridet Apollo*," said Shirley. "It has been amplified :

'Once in the year Apollo laughs, they say :
His sunlight smiles upon us every day.'

"There are clouds sometimes, Mr. Shirley," said Sir Charles.

"Clouds here, it may be, but always sunshine somewhere in the world. Our doubts and fears and troubles are based on the narrow limit of surrounding things. You cannot see that other world in which the lady whom you have lost is dwelling ; if you could, the sight would calm your perturbed spirit at once. Have you never stood on a storm-smitten hill, and seen the fairest sunshine leagues away ? I have. Think of the royal brightness of the immeasurable universe ; do not brood over the shadow that rests on a single narrow spot."

"You are a cheery companion, Mr. Shirley," said the General. "Our friend Count

Cassius said that of you, and I endorse it. I should like you to see the portrait of the lady whom I lost, and whom I have mourned, perhaps unwisely."

It was in a room to itself, lighted specially for the picture's sake. A young creature with sparkling hazel eyes under long lashes, and waves of light-brown hair, dressed in a riding-habit, just about to mount a sturdy Exmoor pony. Her gauntleted hand was on the saddle; her eyes looked lovingly round toward some one unseen in the picture. The consummate artist had made that look only too loving—only too pathetic—for it retarded the lapse of time, and made the grief of twenty years ago seem as if it were yesterday's.

"It is beautiful," said Gabriel Shirley—"too beautiful to cause sadness. As the illustrious poet has it :

'That sparkling eye was never meant for death;
Those lips will always draw immortal breath.'

Sir Charles sighed profoundly, and then smiled.

"Mr. Shirley," he said, "you have cheered me more than I have been cheered since my darling died: You will come and see me again—come and stay."

"I will come with pleasure, Sir Charles, if I have time. I designed to visit Patagonia this Summer, but something has occurred which appears likely to keep me in England; so I think I may promise to come, if you will receive me at short notice."

"With pleasure," said the General. "And now, if you must go on to Monckton Saint Mary, let me order out a dog-cart. It would take you over there in twenty minutes or so."

"Thanks, Sir Charles; but look at the moon. As the illustrious poet hath it:

'See how Latona's daughter walks on high—
Chaste queen of love, bright lady of the sky.'

So Gabriel Shirley tramped off towards the Bear Inn at Monckton Saint Mary, where he meant to sleep ; and not ten minutes had he been on the road, when clouds came up rapidly, and the lady of the sky disappeared, and he had to feel his way with his staff ; and he became aware of tortuous lane-windings, and of brooks invisibly babbling close to his ear, so that he felt some dread of walking into the water. Presently he dimly saw that the road had two branches, and at this undecided moment he fortunately heard footsteps through the noise of the running water. A lantern approached ; two female forms were visible ; he emerged from the darkness into the lantern's circle of light, and asked the way to Monckton Saint Mary. A charming girl, with hazel eyes and light-brown hair, was revealed by the flickering light. She told him, with a smile, which was his road. Had

he not known beforehand of the likeness,
he would have thought Cecilia Wray the
phantom of the portrait.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INTERVIEW.

“Weariness ends, adventure oft begins,
Passing wide gates of ancient cosy inns.”

I. P.

MONCKTON SAINT MARY is a small market-town. Its church has a massive square tower, with a niche high up in its western wall, wherein stands an ancient statue of the Virgin; and right on the top of the tower grows a yew-tree, sprung from a seed long years ago, and now growing so large that the Rural Dean and the Rector have gravely decided that it must be cut down, or will ruin the tower. Around the

church and churchyard is an open green, known as the Palace Lawn ; tradition says that there once stood at Monckton the palace of a Saxon King, but no recent antiquary has been keen-eyed enough to find any traces of the edifice. Still in the middle of the lawn there is a deep spring-fed pool full of water-lilies, known as the King's Bath ; and so everybody at Monckton religiously believes that some Edgar or Ethelred took his matutinal dip there centuries ago. I have found many old pools named in similar ways, in the course of my wanderings ; hence I judge that our old English princes loved country retreats and abundant water. At the Bear, which stands on the very verge of the Palace Lawn, Gabriel Shirley found the simple entertainment he required ; found also a buxom landlady, whose tongue wagged freely, and who chronicled all the gossip of the place. Spring had come slowly

hitherto; our wayfarer therefore was not loth to sit by the fire in the bar, and listen to his hostess's yarns, while he sipped his whiskey and took snuff. The landlady's stories and the drowsy murmur of a kettle on the fire made him feel comfortably somnolent. Indeed at last he fell fast asleep while the old lady was in one of her most scandalous narratives, and dropt into a quaint dream, in which figured Sir Charles Wray and Cecilia, Hugh Roland and Frances Carey, all mixed up in an inextricable labyrinth of impossible adventures. When at last he awoke, a little puzzled as to where he was, the landlady's voice was still to be heard, nor was there cessation of the kettle's under-song. But now he decided on retiring, and a "neat-handed Phillis" lighted him to his chamber.

After one of those wholesome country breakfasts that you only get beyond the

reach of railways—crisp bacon and fresh eggs and cream, and the greenest of cress or lettuce—Mr. Shirley started stoutly on his forward way, and reached Avonside soon after noon. He went into the King's Arms, and refreshed himself on bread and cheese and ale. He decided to rest awhile before he went in search of Frances, whom he calculated on finding somewhere in the river-girdled lawn of Carey Farm, taking an afternoon stroll. He did not wish to excite her brother's curiosity by calling at the house, if it could be avoided. So, having refreshed himself, he stood at the parlour window and looked at the dull market-place. No creature moved, except a dissipated cock and some mournful hens that were dejectedly pecking at nothing particular ; except, moreover, the fluttering pigeons of the inn, and some clerical jackdaws that haunted the church tower. The little barber was asleep

in his doorway ; and the young drapers and grocers at Hall's were either catching flies or reading the *Family Herald*. The sole movement for a long time was when a gentleman's servant rode up to the saddler's to get some harness-mending done—which resulted in saddler and groom coming on together to the King's Arms, and drinking beer. Gabriel Shirley drew a diamond from his finger (his only foppery) and wrote on the inn-window :

“Salt food, hot travel, often kindle thirst ;
Of its provokers idleness is worst.”

After this effort he naturally rang for another tankard.

People do not wear diamond rings in these days for the sake of writing epigrams on inn-windows ; nor indeed are there left many inn-windows that would tempt the epigrammatic abacist. We often hear the custom laughed at, but there is something to

be said in its favour. The old-fashioned country inn had a homely poetry. Painters of manners, from Ben Jonson to Charles Dickens, have made it a favourite theme. No man would dream of using his diamond on the plate glass of a company's very grand hotel; but the dim green glass of the casements in a smoky inn-parlour seemed the very place on which to record the quality of the landlord's wine or the landlady's beauty. Foolish things were written, doubtless; but I fear that is true of other kinds of literary work; and it is certain that wise and witty things were also written. If there were any indefatigable archæologist who would make a collection of "inn-window poetry," I apprehend that it would be uncommon pleasant reading.

At last Gabriel Shirley started on his errand, and found his way—as once before—into the quiet walks of Carey Farm. His

calculation was accurate. As he turned a corner, under a white-rinded birch, whose drooping boughs were like dishevelled hair, Frances's dogs barked at him, and Frances herself came with a recognising smile along the path.

"I am again a trespasser," said Mr. Shirley. "I trust you will forgive me, since I come with a motive that I hope to justify. You will believe that I do not intrude on you without reason, but I might not be able to explain this to Mr. Carey."

"My brother is away from home for a few days," she said, "so you would not have had to make any explanation to him. But I hope after coming here once, you have no need to apologize for coming again. I am only sorry Walter is not here to welcome you."

"As I come on what I suppose I may call business, I do not wholly regret Mr.

Carey's absence. May I come at once to the point? The young man who was accused of murder, and who escaped from the Asylum—you feel a slight interest in him, I believe?"

"He was a familiar acquaintance," said Frances. "I cannot believe him guilty. I fear his escape is a false step."

"I think not. God guided him to my cottage, where I deem him safe for a time. Of course, as he cannot return to Avonside, he will have to work; and the difficulty will be to find him some employment in which he is likely to escape detection; but that does not press. He can eat his bread and cheese with me till I see a way for him."

"O," said Frances, eagerly drawing the heavy bag from her pocket, "I have some money for him here from his aunt, Miss Hutchison. Please take it."

"It is too heavy for an old man like me, my dear ; let the stalwart young fellow come and fetch it himself."

"O no, he must not come here ; he would be found out instantly. Do keep him from coming here!"

"I might as easily keep Vesuvius from an eruption, or the rain from falling. He says he can do nothing till he has seen you."

"*Me !*"

"Yes, you. I suppose he is in love, though I don't pretend to understand such things. As the illustrious poet said, in a slightly cynical mood :

'Tis vain to heed the maddened lover's screech :
Girl is like girl, as peach is like to peach.'

But I suppose my fugitive thinks Miss Carey very different from all other women."

"I should think it must be his aunt he wants to see," said Frances, "and you have made a mistake. I am sure she will be

delighted. She lives at a place called The Hollies."

"I see what it is, Miss Carey," said Gabriel Shirley, "the youngster has never done anything more than *look* loving, and you are determined not to encourage him. Quite right, too. Why didn't he speak in time, and not run off and become a criminal lunatic? As the illustrious poet hath it :

'Whatever stiff defence the maiden guards,
Why, kiss her first and ask her afterwards.'

"Poor Hugh did not act on that principle," said Frances with a laugh. "It's no use fencing, Mr. Shirley ; I think Hugh Roland a fine fellow—quite certain not to be a murderer ; but I am not at all sure he is the man I would marry. I find in him what I find in most young men now : if they can enjoy themselves, they don't care to find good hard work to do. I hate to see fine young fellows with plenty of brain and

muscle wasting their time on billiards and shooting—never thinking of anything else. Hugh wants to be taught the meaning of life.”

“He is learning, Miss Carey. He has not been in a mad-house for nothing. I judge him wiser and stronger than he was. At any rate, this I may say: he loves you very heartily. He pines to see you before he takes to some new form of life. He may never see you again, perhaps—or it may be quite otherwise, and the sky may clear above him, and you may see him so often as to grow tired of him. As the illustrious poet hath it :

‘This have I seen amid the faults of life—
The kindest husband tires the wisest wife.’ ”

“Don’t talk about husband and wife, please,” said Frances, who was a little cross, yet could not help laughing. “What do you want me to do ?”

“Hugh wants to see you. He will come here any day you like to appoint. I will be with him, and see that he is safe. I am not at all afraid. If a fugitive is concealed on scientific principles, he will never be caught. As the illustrious poet says :

‘Hide nothing high in air or underground ;
Just put it where it seems it must be found.’”

Frances was silent for awhile. She stood under a great ash tree—it might almost have been the ash Yggdrasil, under whose boughs of ambrosial arch the gods hold counsel, while the demon-dragon Nidhögg gnaws its roots, and the three Norns who rule Past, Present, and Future, spin the interminable web of human destiny beneath its stately columnar stem. She made diagrams on the gravel with her parasol. Gabriel Shirley, seeing her thoughtful downcast eyes beneath her wide garden hat, admired her quietude of character.

"If that boy gets her," he said to himself, "she'll make a man of him."

"I will see Hugh," she said after a while. "The sooner the better, I think. Walter will be home on Saturday, I know. But I am terribly inhospitable, Mr. Shirley, and you have been so very kind. Do come up and have a glass of wine or a cup of tea."

"Tea, with pleasure," said Gabriel Shirley. "I am an inveterate lover of good tea."

So that refreshing beverage was served in Frances Carey's favourite oak parlour, and she and her guest chatted pleasantly. No word was said of Hugh Roland till Mr. Shirley rose to go.

"I think I know, Miss Carey, what I may tell Hugh," he said. "It is, that you will see him as a friend simply. If he has anything to say to you that is more or less than friendly, that is a matter between you and him."

"What do you mean by 'more or less'?" she asked.

"The illustrious poet shall answer," said Shirley.

"'Less than a friend will a fierce foe discover;
More than a friend can only be a lover.'"

"Ah, then I know what to expect," said Frances. "I don't think he will be less than a friend."

"You shall see him the day after to-morrow, and judge," said Mr. Shirley. "I should like to clear the boy's fair fame, and to find that he was worthy of you."

Which saying, he kissed Frances's extended hand in courtly fashion, and left her with tears in her eyes.

CHAPTER XIII.

OLD MAID AND YOUNG.

If youth has beauty, beauty also age
 Possesses, when we calmly turn the page :
 A lady loveable, who love has missed,
 Is like a rosebud by hot noon unkissed—
 Cool shadows all her purity prolong,
 And her faint fragrance lasts till evensong.

L. P.

“O Miss Hutchison, I have seen him !”
 cried Frances, as she entered the
 drawing-room at The Hollies, causing the
 old lady’s abominably cacophonous pet par-
 rot to shriek hideously.

“Whom, dear ?” said the old lady, start-
 ing up and turning her knitting for a week.
 “Not my poor dear Hugh ?”

"No: but a nice old gentleman Hugh is staying with—a Mr. Shirley. He is going to bring Hugh over to see us the day after to-morrow."

"Isn't it dreadfully dangerous?" asked Miss Hutchison.

"O no, he is disguised in some wonderful way, so that perhaps neither of us would know him."

"And who is Mr. Shirley?—and how came poor Hugh to be with him?"

"He is the dearest old gentleman, whom I once met accidentally in our grounds, and I liked him directly I saw him. And isn't it lucky that Hugh happened to go to him for shelter?"

"Ah, my dear, I recognise the hand of Providence in it: He would not allow my dear innocent boy to be too severely punished. But are you quite certain that this old gentleman is to be trusted?"

“You should only see him, and I am sure you would believe in him,” said Frances.

Her faith in the old gentleman was perfect—more especially as he believed Hugh to be innocent; and she was quite ready to credit him with the power to resist the united efforts of all the Asylum warders and the police. Old Miss Hutchison’s heart gladdened at the thought that Hugh would soon be in possession of the bag of gold; but as Hugh could not know that for weeks Frances had been weighted with this gift, his visit to Avonside was evidently to seek an interview with Frances.

“And how shall you manage it?” said Miss Hutchison.

“They will meet me in the garden in the afternoon about five o’clock, near the little harbour.”

“My dear girl, I pray that it may be safe—it would be such a terrible thing if

they found Hugh. Are you quite certain you can trust the servants?"

"None of them will know anything about it, except Rachel; and you know that I can trust her. She will bring some refreshments to the arbour, which will be nothing unusual, as I often take meals there, and she will say that the 'funny old gentleman,' as she calls him, has come to see me again. You may be certain that if Hugh is safe with anybody, he is with Mr. Shirley. My only regret is that you cannot at present see him yourself, I know it will be better that you should not, as it might create suspicion; and no doubt the police are watching this neighbourhood, and especially your house. I never see a strange-looking man in the village, but I fancy he must be a detective."

Miss Hutchison sat silent for some time, fumbling with her knitting, and trying to

pick up the dropped stitches, but her hands trembled so much that her work was only in a more hopeless state of confusion. She longed to see "her dear boy," but she knew it would not be safe. She was almost vexed that it was Frances he must see, and not herself, before he commenced his hard life. And yet she thought what a brave girl Frances was, and how her clear brain seemed to find a way to meet all difficulties. She felt that it was upon Frances she must rely to be Hugh's best friend, and she thought how fortunate he was to have such a friend. At last she said, in a broken voice,

"No, my dear, I must not see him at present. I must be thankful that he can see you: it will give him strength and courage to face his troubles. But how is he to live? He is not accustomed to work; and it will be so difficult for him to

get work without the fear of being discovered."

"I am certain he will fight his way through all difficulties," said Frances.

She had thought so much on this subject since she knew of Hugh's escape, and she felt sure that for her sake he would overcome everything; and now that he was in Mr. Shirley's hands, she was satisfied.

"I think, my dear," said Miss Hutchison, "that, by being economical, I could make up a little annual sum for the poor boy, if your friend Mr. Shirley could manage to have it conveyed to him."

"I know that you are ready to make any sacrifice for him, but I am sure it is not necessary. I will ask Mr. Shirley to tell us if Hugh is ever in want of money, and then you can help him."

"Yes, I would make any sacrifice for him. In the old days I have often felt put

out when he made my room so untidy. He would not wipe his feet, and would upset chairs and stools, and rumple chair-covers. I wish he were here to do it now. He might bring the gravel all over the carpet, knock over the stools, and do just as he liked ! Ah ! I am afraid he will never make this room untidy again. But we must trust in God, and hope for the best. God has been very good in raising up such a friend as Mr. Shirley for him. Do you know why he takes so much interest in him ? I don't think he could have met him before."

"No, but he firmly believes in his innocence, and says that in time the truth must come out, but it may not be for many years ; and as there is no proof as to the real murderer, if Stephen Heath really is dead——"

"Really dead !" interrupted Miss Hutchison—"has there ever been a doubt upon

that point? Were not his watch and chain and his letters found, and part of his coat, and blood, and all sorts of things?"

"Yes, but was that his body?" said Frances.

"You know what a shrewd old woman Rachel is, and she has told me that it is generally believed in the village that Stephen Heath is alive. If he is, he must have been urged by a strong motive to disappear as he has done. I believe the village rumours are true, that he was in money difficulties, and was obliged to fly."

"And you think the watch, and all the other things found by the river, were put there by Stephen himself, to make people believe he was murdered? What a wicked bad man he must be! Yes, I see it all now; and being jealous of my poor Hugh, he hoped suspicions would fall on him. It is hard that my poor boy's life should be blighted by such a villain."

Miss Hutchison, in her indignation, would have liked to defy the law, to assert boldly and publicly that Stephen was alive, and to restore Hugh to his place in society, without heeding the fact that an enlightened British jury had found him guilty.

“And yet we can but wait,” said Frances. The woman with life before her, and a strong capacity for hope, forgot that, when old people wait, it is for death.

“Yes, child, you can wait. Twenty years may pass, and leave you handsome and blooming still. I shall have gone to sleep long before; and now that it is too late, I feel that I never made enough of my boy.”

The poor old lady quite broke down at last, and in trying to cheer her up, Frances forgot her own troubles for a time. Then the ladies had a cosy cup of tea together, and Miss Hutchison gradually recovered,

and was able to discuss quietly with Frances the chances of the future ; but it was agreed between them that nothing could be done until they knew what Mr. Shirley had to propose.

“It is fortunate that Walter is away,” said Frances. “I do not like hiding anything from him, and yet I feel that he has no sympathy with Hugh. I have tried to look as cheerful as usual, and not let him see how troubled I am ; but I am sure that he does see it, for he says some very sharp things occasionally. And he is always fancying that Hugh will be coming to see me, and if he sees any stranger about, he says it is Hugh in disguise. I know he would not be so hard upon him, if he were not so much taken up with Captain Heath and his friends. He has quite altered to me lately, and I know it is all through that horrible old Captain Heath.”

About ten o'clock Rachel came to escort her young mistress home. Miss Hutchison made her come into the drawing-room, and gave her a glass of wine while Frances went upstairs to put on her hat. The old servant, talkative always, warmed into unusual freedom under the influence of Miss Hutchison's port; and quite bewildered the simple old lady by her odd use of certain long, and not always applicable, words, which she had picked up chiefly from her old master.

"Miss Frances tells me," Miss Hutchison said, "that you know she is to see my unfortunate nephew to-morrow. I cannot help feeling a little nervous about it, but I suppose it is safe enough."

"You don't think Mr. Hugh would hurt his sweetheart, do you, ma'am?" Rachel asked, with a humorous twinkle in her bright old eyes. "Of course, instead of letting him see her we ought to call in the law

and police and give him up! I wish I could give them that convinced him of murder a piece of my mind. It would not do for a respectable woman like me, Miss Hutchison, to be incited for contempt of court, which is a state of things my old master has explained to me—he never thought it a trouble to enliven ignorance—but I do say that I have no opinion of the judge and juries who shut up Mr. Hugh for a madman.”

“It is a most miserable and unfortunate affair altogether,” said Miss Hutchison sighing.

“Very misfortunate, ma’am,” said Rachel, as if she were correcting Miss Hutchison, “but then no good ever comes of two cooks in a kitchen, or of two young gentlemen philandressing—as my poor master would say—after one young lady; it stands to reason that she can’t like both, leastways Miss Frances could not; she’s a regular goddess

Diana, she is, begging your pardon, Miss Hutchison, for mentioning a heathen dignity."

"Then you think Mr. Heath admired Miss Frances too?"

"It was the talk of the village, ma'am, for which he was to blame; but his admiration was quite of an interior sort. He was the kind of man to hang up likenesses of them ballot girls in his room; women with paper frills for petticoats (which it stands to reason wouldn't bear much wear), and to say to other young men who came to smoke and drink with him, that he knew a finer girl than any of them—Frances Carey at the Farm. I had it all from Mr. Boyd, the Captain's own man, who have heard the talk go on, and shameful it were too; as my poor master used to say we ought to cultivate reticence (which I did think when I was a girl were a thing I could grow in the kitchen

garden and asked for the seed many times), especially before servants, which is by nature our interiors, and quite right too."

"I never liked Stephen Heath," said Miss Hutchison, "and I wish my poor boy had never been intimate with him. Well, child," as Frances at that moment appeared, "I have had a talk with Rachel, and she does not think there is any danger. I shall be very anxious to see you when it is all over, and I am sure I can trust you to be kind to the poor fellow."

She kissed the girl heartily as she said good-night; perhaps she guessed that Hugh would be the next to touch those rosy lips.

CHAPTER XIV.

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

My castle was a gay retreat
 In Air, that somewhat gusty abire,
 A cherub's model country seat—
 Could model cherub such require.
 Nor twinge nor tax existence tortured ;
 The cherubs even spared my orchard.

FREDERICK LOCYER.

MR. GABRIEL SHIRLEY, satisfied with what he had done, made his way homeward. The weather was fine, the way was pleasant, his spirits were high. There was nothing he enjoyed so much as bringing enjoyment to other people. He fancied he had done something to lead Sir Charles Wray to a healthier mood of mind, and he

felt certain that he was about to confer some amount of happiness on both Hugh Roland and Frances Carey. A sanguine temper had carried this generous adventurous old gentleman through many successful schemes for the good of others ; and as he tramped along he blew imaginative bubbles, every whit as radiant and iridescent as those which children blow in Summer air. The fugitive Hugh was to have his honour restored, and to find a career, and to make Frances happy. The General was to look at life pleasantly, and take more interest in his pretty Cecilia.

As to Cecilia . . . Gabriel Shirley was walking through the great beech-wood on a yellow carpet of last year's leaves, softer than any Turkey or Axminster . . . why, Cecilia must marry. Whom? A brilliant idea occurred to him. Why not Count Cassius Grimani? Count Cassius had been tempted many a time, 'twas true; he had been a

wanderer all over the world, and was considered a consummate judge of the infinitely numerous forms of female beauty. He was rather a seraph, to use the phraseology of a certain novelist. Still, he was now in the very prime of life, and must surely be growing weary of his wanderings.

“O, he is the very man,” thought Shirley, and threw his trusty staff into the air at the happy idea. “Count Cassius must come back and marry Cecilia. I wonder where he is?”

A very natural theme for wonder. From his boyhood, having no family ties, and abundant money, he had been seeing the world. He was familiar with imperial courts, and with gold-diggers' cabins. He and Gabriel Shirley, both bitten by the *oestrus* of adventure, had met in many lands, and gone through some rough business together. Shirley had pleasant reminiscences

of the tall agile gallant young Florentine, who used to cap his quotations with long screeds from Dante and Ariosto, and whose handsome brown-bearded face, with keen dark eyes under arched eyebrows, might very well fascinate a woman. What a shot he was! What a rider! What a swordsman! What a singer! What a sketcher! What a linguist! Gabriel Shirley could not exhaust the string of his friend's perfections; and, indeed, Count Cassius was an Admirable Crichton of modern times, a man who, without genius, so far as I know, had what is more serviceable, if not so delicious, a perfectly versatile talent. Genius comprehends; talent understands. Genius does one thing to absolute perfection; supreme talent does all things well. If a military genius like Napoleon could have as lieutenant a man of consummate talent like Marlborough, he would never fail. What a pity

Milton could not have been secretary to Shakespeare instead of to Cromwell! Sometimes both faculties exist in the same man—very rarely, however; the only great example I recollect is Cæsar.

As Gabriel Shirley emerged from the beechwood, and passed on to the open common, he saw Hugh Roland in the distance, coming from his cottage, doubtless looking for him eagerly.

“Now,” said he to himself, “I shall have to satiate the insatiable. I must tell this young lover how his mistress looked, what she said, what she thought, or what I thought she thought. I must answer the same question five times over. Shall I silence him with fiction—tell him she is to marry next week? It would drive him mad, and he would have to go back to the Asylum. No, I must even take pity on him, and endure his endless questioning.”

But in truth it was not so tiresome as he expected; for Hugh, though eager to hear all that his friend could tell him about Frances, had, while pondering over his troubles in solitude, decided that he must let his love for her remain in abeyance until a happier time. He had no right, he thought, to cloud her clear spirit with his shame and grief. Suffering from a remediless mistake of the law, he could but wait and hope. It would be cowardly and cruel to draw Frances Carey into his own ruin. Thus thinking, he did not show the eagerness Mr. Shirley expected; and the old gentleman grew all the more pleasantly communicative, as he had not an importunate questioner to baffle.

“She is as beautiful and gentle as ever,” he said to Hugh. “She knows you are innocent, and prays that your innocence may be fully proved. She is a noble girl.

As the illustrious poet hath it :

‘ Her bright keen eye can shame the sons of wrong :
Her free fair voice can make the soldier strong.’

That lady, O Roland, should console you for even the sad trouble whose end it is impossible to see : be like the hero whose name you bear, the mighty nephew of Charlemagne, who fell at Roncesvalles. She is as perfect a woman as Aldabella, I will maintain with this quarter-staff. But I am talking of people who lived, if they lived at all, a thousand years ago ; and I am forgetting my own hunger and thirst. Where is Carry ? As the illustrious poet hath it :

‘ When with long toil the forces seem to fail,
The cure is juicy steak and nut-brown ale.’

Carry bustled about ; Mr. Shirley washed in Lavengro’s fashion at the pump in the courtyard, and in a very short time he sat down to a refreshing meal, joined by Hugh,

whose appetite was not so good as it ought to have been.

"Please, sir," said Carry, presently, "there were two policemen here while you were away. They said they were after two men that had run away from somewhere. I said I didn't know any men except father, and he never ran away from anybody. They asked me if there was nobody else about, and I said there was no men, I was sure: there was a gentleman a-staying with master, but he was out, and master was out. And what do you think they said, sir?"

"What, Carry?"

"Why, one says to the other, 'The girl's a hidiot.' I don't know what a hidiot is, but I don't believe I'm one, and so I told him. And then they went away."

"I saw those fellows," said Hugh, when Carry had left the room, "and was very glad they didn't find me at home. I hid in

a bit of copse, and heard them say as they passed it was no use searching in this direction. I was in a terrible funk, I can tell you."

"*They* seem to have been the *hidiots*," said Mr. Shirley, "if an idiot means a person so full of his own ideas that he can accept none from any one else. I think little Fetch was too clever for them. But now to talk of matter more important. We must start hence early to-morrow, to get to Avonside in good time next day. Walter Carey is not at home. You must meet Frances in the gardens. Nobody will know you in that amazing wig. Dressed as you are now, you can pass for a servant of mine: try to make your walk a slovenly slouch when we happen to meet anybody. It will be quite safe: keep up your spirits, and don't dishearten Miss Carey by looking melancholy."

"I doubt whether I ought to see her, or to think about her at all in my miserable condition."

"Don't talk nonsense, or I'll send for the police. You have abundant reward for all your trouble in the love of that true-hearted girl. You have no right to be a coward when she is so brave."

"How do you know that she loves me?" said Roland.

"O, I shall give you up. Doesn't she wish to see you? What more do you ask? Men are getting degenerate, as Helen's old nurse said of Theseus. You have a great trouble to bear, and a beautiful lady who willingly helps you to bear it, and you hesitate! Pshaw! We start at sunrise tomorrow. Be resolute. I do not mean to let you off. When you have once again looked into Miss Carey's bright blue eyes, you will know no further fear."

With intent of early journeying, they went early to bed. Hugh Roland, before he tried to sleep, knelt down and tried to pray. It is a wonderful and beautiful instinct which induces us, when in dire distress, to ask God for help. Much have we heard of the absurdity of prayer; the modern philosopher, as much bewildered as one of Milton's philosophic devils, wants to know whether the prayer of a mere man can induce the Diety to alter his course. "This materialist man of science cannot see that even prayer has its place in God's great design, and that the supreme cry of a human spirit to its Almighty, and all-loving Father may be a stronger force than a telegraphic message. The dull scientists who would divide a hospital, and pray for one section, and leave the other unprayed for, and see which gets well first, are incapable of knowing—or even of guessing—what

prayer means. It is the child's cry to his Father. No man ever prayed heartily without a loving answer—not always what he asked, for the Father knows best what the child needs. Prayer is the spirit's best refreshment; it is the highest conceivable form of poetry; it is converse with God. May I never know a man who never prays or a woman who never weeps. Prayer is the spirit's sunlight: tears its tender dew.

Any way, Hugh Roland, having prayed, felt courage given him, felt certainty of better times, slept tranquilly. There seemed a magic music in his ears all through that night. It ran into vague words:

“ You have prayed to God and He gives you peace,
As the stars come, as the stars go;
And the storm in your heart shall surely cease,
For the tides ebb as the tides flow.

“ Arise, arise, for your lady's eyes!
She will kiss you—she will kiss true.
As the mist of night from the meadow flies
The lark soars in the lark's blue.”

A quaint tune rang in his ears when
Fetch roused him, and it seemed as if a
myriad such ballad-rhymes were wedded to
it.

CHAPTER XV.

FRANCES AND HUGH.

“ Je suis, je suis le cri de joie
 Qui sort des prés à leur réveil ;
 Et c'est moi que la terre envoie
 Offrir un salut au soleil.”

VICTOR DE LAPRADE.

A MERRY morning came, a delicious sunrise, dew-spherules and bird-warble everywhere. After a hasty breakfast, off started Gabriel Shirley and Hugh Roland on their tramp. A curiously contrasted couple : Mr. Shirley in his invariable blue coat and knee-breeches of ancient fashion ; while, in fustian jacket and corduroys, with a coarse straw hat on a rough wig of hemp-

coloured hair, Hugh Roland looked a very fine specimen of the English labourer. He went off in higher spirits than he had felt for many a day. It was not merely the infection of his comrade's sanguine temper; it was chiefly the reply of God to the strong prayer of his heart. The world seemed happy to him. The lark's song rang through his brain like a bugle-call to the battle of life; the wide-branching oak-tree, spreading its immemorial foliage to receive the delicious dew, taught him a lesson of calm.

"This is pleasant," said Gabriel Shirley. "Some people trouble us with the miseries of human life, but I like its felicities."

"One cannot always have its felicities," said Hugh.

"Not always in the form we choose; but they are sometimes to be found in the very depths of our miseries. Look at your own case. On the one hand law has declared

you a criminal lunatic; on the other, God, and your own conscience, and your secret heart, and your friend, declare that you are no such thing. Is not the balance in your favour, my friend?"

"Yes," quoth Hugh. "But I cannot always feel this. Sometimes all my happier ideas are crushed and benumbed by the thought of the great injustice I have to endure."

"I have tried to prove to you that it may not be injustice. What is the use? Don't listen to my logic—listen to the song of the birds. Don't trouble about the future—enjoy the immediate moment."

Gabriel Shirley on this occasion chose a shorter cut to Avonside, avoiding Monckton Saint Mary, and traversing quiet meadows and lonely lanes. They took their noontide meal by a clear spring, that rose beneath an enormous lime-tree. An arch of grey stone

protected the crystal water. There was no human habitation in sight. The air was very calm; only a few white clouds sailed through the sky.

“Forget the future and the past,” said Shirley, as a cold fowl and a home-made loaf, and a flask of whiskey emerged from his wallet. “Here is pure water wherewith to temper the ardent spirit.”

Hugh, not at all loth to do something in the way of lunch, set to work at once. That fowl was picked to the bone, and voted the prince of fowls, while the cool water of the way-side well was declared to mix perfectly with Irish whiskey.

“This is enjoyment,” said Shirley, leaning back on the green turf, and looking into the sky, as if he would fain fathom its depths. “Many divisions of mankind have been suggested, Mr. Roland, but, in my judgment, there are only two classes—those who enjoy

life, and those who succeed in life. The two faculties are not often reconcilable. To succeed in life you must think of what you have, and of what you wish to get. To enjoy life you must think of what you are, and of what you aspire to be. Enjoyment is more difficult than success; it is an art—success is a trade.”

“Have we a right to enjoy life?” asked Hugh.

“Have we a right to reject the enjoyment offered by life? The problem which lies at the basis of human existence is simple enough. Why is there error, sin, crime? it is asked. Might not the omnipotent Creator have made a perfect world? Of course; but it would have been a machine. Making man in His own image, He gave him the faculty of choice. Not being omniscient, not being able to forecast the innumerable possibilities of result from any action,

man often blunders frightfully. But he is independent, he is responsible, he is lord of himself. God accepts him as a peer. He is free. The strength and weakness of the sons of men are alike shown in their freedom. The wise man enjoys—for there is not a movement of the world devoid of the elements of enjoyment. But come, while I talk metaphysics we lose time. A lady, I know, never reads an essay if she sees the words *a priori* in it. She is right. Let us go forward, regardless of *a priori* considerations."

They slept at a wayside inn that night and reached Carey Farm early on the following afternoon. Mr. Shirley, anxious to avoid unnecessary risks, took field paths which led them outside the village.

There was a wicket-gate from the woods without to the quieter part of the Carey Farm gardens : by this they entered (ah, how

well Hugh knew it), and passed along a path lined with Portugal laurel. Presently, in the distance, Frances Carey was to be seen. She was sitting on a rustic seat; she had taken off her hat, which dangled by a ribbon in her hand; her eyes were fixed as if looking at the river, but in truth her gaze went further. Modern metaphysicians have, to conceal their own unfathomable ignorance, invented a great word, which they always Lyttonianly print with a capital letter—the Unknowable. Frances was in the realm of the Unknowable. She was wondering what her life would be. The feeling came upon her that there was change imminent. Who (with any imagination) has not known it? As, before the heavy drip of the rain that pioneers thunder, there is in the air a warning that touches the nerves of men, so the movements of mankind are felt before they occur. There is presentiment—

ay, and there is prophecy. Shall I call a man blind because he sees what I cannot see?

“What a picture she was!” thought Hugh Roland; and his heart trembled as he saw her, in deep reverie, unconscious. Could he have known? She was thinking of him. Under her eyelids there were unshed tears, like those in crown imperial bells.

As if by instinct and consent, Shirley and Roland trod quietly, keeping much to the soft grass. They were close on Frances before she knew them. She rose: the arched foliage above, the silver Avon below, seemed as if meant to show off her sweet and simple beauty.

Awakened from reverie, few people are quite self-possessed. And Frances had her difficulty. She had in Hugh’s absence probed her heart, and discovered that she liked him much better than she thought;

and, besides, she liked him (what woman wouldn't?) all the more for his troubles; and she did not wish to let him know all this.

What did she do? Stepped forward and welcomed the old-fashioned ubiquitous gentleman in blue coat and knee-breeches. His companion amazed her. However wise a woman may be, she likes a man's hair to curl, and his trowsers to show the shape of his legs. Hugh's hempen locks were as stiff as a halter, and his well-shapen hip and calf were hidden in loose-fitting bags of corduroy. Frances was quite shocked. She looked at him as if she did not know him. She knew it was cruel: but where was the woman with a lover who did not like to be cruel to him now and then?

Hugh Roland, however, did not perceive this. He was possessed overweightedly with strong feelings of his own. It was

enough for him to be in his lady's presence : it tranquillized him to behold those eyes of familiar beauty, always calm and thoughtful. They shed peace upon him so fully that he forgot his great trouble, forgot his awkward appearance. Had he been alone with her, he would assuredly have told his love in brief and ardent words : but Mr. Shirley's presence prevented this indiscretion.

That gentleman, however, was not disposed to be in the way.

"My young friend will not object, Miss Carey, to your smiling at his wonderful costume," he said, "if you will tell him he is welcome. With your permission, I will take a short solitary stroll in your charming pleasaunce, and leave him to tell you his adventures. I have heard them all before. As the illustrious poet hath it :

'Nothing is drearier than a twice-told tale,
But there's one story that is never stale.'"

Murmuring thus, the old gentleman, no whit wearied by his long walk, loitered along a pleasant garden-path, talking to himself, as was often his wont. I think he was quoting something from that illustrious poet whose works he appears to have had by heart. When he was beyond the first leafy angle, Frances said :

“Oh, Mr. Roland, I am so glad to see you, and so sorry for your trouble. And yet, you know, I can’t help smiling at your strange dress. You look so very odd, I should never have known you.”

“I am glad for two reasons, Miss Carey ; if I am so well disguised, I am pretty safe—and I know you would not laugh at me unless you believed me innocent.”

“Why, who could doubt that ?” she asked. “The idea of *your* being a murderer.”

“I doubted it myself for a time,” he replied. “I recollected giving him a push

that night, when he said something insolent ; and when the accusation was made against me, I was so bewildered that I could remember nothing accurately. I grew more calm in the Asylum, where I did garden-work, and was comparatively content ; but I longed for freedom, and was driven half wild again by the opportunity of getting it."

"What became of the man who escaped with you? Was he mad?"

"He was quite mad. Although an old man his madness made him stronger than I. I could not keep up with him, and have never heard of him since that day."

"And what do you think of doing now?"

"I don't know yet. Of course I must work, and it is difficult to know how this can be managed in England ; but I trust to Mr. Shirley, who is as wise as he is kind. How fortunate I was to take refuge with him!"

"I am afraid you will have to go abroad," said Frances.

"No; I could not bear that, for two reasons. I want to be on the spot, in case that either Heath is alive or it is found out who murdered him. I believe he is living."

"I hope he is," said Miss Carey. "And pray what is your other reason?"

"May I tell you? It is that I dread the thought of being separated from *you* by the sea. I have no right to say a word; you must have seen that I worshipped you long ago; and now, that I have so great a sorrow—now, that I am an outcast, and dare not face any one who knows me—I feel more deeply than ever my unworthiness of you. But I have learnt something from my trouble, and that is that I have been foolishly wasting my life hitherto; I hope now to be of some use in the world, and if my innocence should be proved—as I firmly believe it will—my

greatest delight will be to know that it gives you some satisfaction."

Frances did not reply for a minute or so. Her face was towards the river, and seemed to be gazing into its swift clear waters. She was wondering what best to say. The situation was a dilemma. What would her brother say, if he were aware of this interview? She believed that she was doing right, but she hated all secrecy and concealment. Hers was naturally a clear brain, but she could not at once see her way through the labyrinth. So she thought it best to speak simple truth—as far as maiden might speak it without self-betrayal.

"Mr. Roland," said she, "I quite understand you. What my feelings are toward you I hardly know; I have not asked myself; but you may be sure I do not hate you. Of course I know you are innocent of murder. As to what you say about having

wasted your life, I do not see that you need trouble yourself; having a good income, you had no need to hurry yourself in choosing a career. You see I am trying to regard the question coolly and temperately. At this moment you have to seek safety and occupation; you must not think of making love, or any other amusement. You must wait for all that."

"Ah!" he said, sadly, "*I* can wait—all my life long if need be. But I dare not ask any one to wait for *me*—or even to think of me."

There was unendurable sadness in the tone of his voice. Frances felt a divine pity for him—a pity that warmed into life the unconscious love in her heart. She was talking gravely and coldly, to avoid anything serious; but she would gladly have thrown herself into his arms and wept for his sorrows, like Coleridge's Genevieve

"beside the ruined tower." She longed to give herself to him, and take the worser half of his trouble. But she controlled herself, and said,

"Don't think of waiting—think of work. You will be free and happy in good time, and will smile at your past troubles. Of course I know all that you mean, and I thank you, and that is all I ought to say. I am in no hurry to marry, though the little chits of sixteen say I am an old woman. Marrying and giving in marriage are not the only things worth living for."

Thus quietly she talked, with a fire burning at her heart that made her lips as tremulous as red rose-petals when the south wind stirs at noon. It was agony to her to calm herself, but she saw the necessity. Hugh Roland looked gloomy, and answered nothing. Then she said,

"Let us be true friends now, whatever

happens. Can we not contrive to find some means of writing to each other? It would be easy, with the help of Mr. Shirley and your aunt. O, and now I am forgetting dear Miss Hutchison, though I have a weighty memorandum of her in my pocket. Look here."

The canvas bag of sovereigns was produced.

"The dear old lady is not brave enough to see you, Hugh" (how he liked to hear her use his Christian name!) "but she wants you to take this money, in case you put Mr. Shirley to any expense. You can easily repay her some day, you know. You must take it, or she will be quite miserable. And now about letters. You write to me, under cover to your aunt, and ask Mr. Shirley to address it. Then you can tell me where to write to you, according to circumstances."

"And you *will* write to me?" he said, in quite a cheerful tone.

"Of course I will. It is important that you should know what occurs here. Heath may be heard of, or his murderer, if he was murdered. Then write to me and tell me all about yourself. Let me be your friend. Think of nothing else just now. Trust me as if I were a man. I will not disappoint you."

"I am sure you will not," he said, and seemed as if he would have kissed her, but restrained himself. She knew what was in his mind as well as if she could see the inner machinery of his soul. She knew that to pass a certain limit would be to bring in all the maddening waves of love; so she courageously maintained her external coolness. There is snow on the summit of Vesuvius an hour before it breaks into inextinguishable flame.

Mr. Gabriel Shirley's steps approached. The old gentleman came leisurely along, with a satisfied smile.

"We have had our talk, Mr. Shirley," said Frances, going to meet him. "I want to arrange a correspondence, with your help and Miss Hutchison's, so that Mr. Roland may know anything that happens here, and that his friends may know what he is doing."

"That will be quite easy," said Mr. Shirley. "Even the country postmistress will not find anything to chatter about in letters addressed to me."

Then said Frances,

"Now, please, down in a little arbour here I have put a basket of refreshment. Rachel helped me. She can always be trusted. I am sure you must both be terribly tired and hungry. I meant to have asked you at first, but wanting to talk

to Hugh put it all out of my head."

The harbour, quaintly situate down a zig-zag path close to the river, was admirably arranged for a quiet chat. On the fixed table of wooden mosaic Frances put a white cloth, and some cold roast beef, and wholesome home-brewed ale. Mr. Shirley cut the sirloin in a masterly manner; and Hugh showed that his trouble had not destroyed his appetite, while Frances stood in the doorway with the evening light upon her, and a look as if the beauty of sunset and stream had blended with her own natural beauty. Mr. Shirley looked at her with the healthy delight of the man who loves beauty for its own sweet sake.

Presently Frances, struck by a sudden thought, left them for a short space. When she returned, the sky was growing gray, and Mr. Shirley announced the necessity of starting on their journey. A few miles off,

in a small out-of-the-way village, he thought they might safely pass the night.

As they went together toward the wicket gate, Mr. Shirley tramped energetically forward, while Frances and Hugh perceptibly lingered. As they passed along, she whispered :

“There is a little letter for you here. It is only meant to cheer you up, if you are very sad. Promise me, Hugh, that you will not open it for a long long time—not indeed till you feel very unhappy. And the very day you open it you are to write and tell me.”

Hugh kissed the packet, and promised. Then he said, in a low trembling voice :

“Frances, will you kiss me . . . once ?”

They cling lip to lip for an instant. It was a pure yet passionate kiss. Then, moving faster to overtake Mr. Shirley, they reached the gate. Hugh went forth to try

a new and strange life, a life of secrecy and danger. Frances went back to the solitude of her own room, to think over what she had done that day.

When Hugh went to bed in the little wayside inn that night he looked at the outside of his priceless letter. On the seal were the letters "F. C." with the motto—
"Le temps passe, mais l'amitié reste."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHOICE OF A CAREER.

“Fancy poor Peter Schlemihl driven penniless,
Eager to work—but where to get a character?
How can a man without a shadow get a place?”

The Comedy of Dreams.

THE travellers did not start very early on their homeward walk, so it was late in the evening when they reached that cottage on the moor which to Hugh Roland seemed just now the happiest corner of the world. This was no treason to his lady-love, seeing that Avonside was the scene of a hideous murder which people thought he had done. Much as the companionship of Mr. Shirley had done to calm him, he still

reverted to his misfortunes; the frightful dream of possible murder—the scene in the Assize Court, when he could scarcely identify any figure among the multitude except the stern-browed keen-eyed firm-lipped Judge, who looked more like a granite torso than a man—the long months of apathy in the Asylum, cheered only by congenial garden-walk—last of all the wild escape, when he and his mad comrade seemed hounded on by fiends—all these would course through his brain in hours of reverie, in hours of sleep. The one incident to which he turned with relief was his awakening in the porch of the solitary cottage on the common, when he obtained both solace and repose. He could not help being troubled by a vague fear when he was out of sight of this hospitable corner.

Gabriel Shirley's next idea was to find employment for his troublesome client.

Hugh Roland had made up his mind to work and wait: what he chiefly desired was some occupation involving change of scene and plenty to do.

"We must get you a place as a railway-guard," said Mr. Shirley, when they discussed it. He scarcely spoke seriously, thinking it an idea Roland would not entertain. But it suited Hugh exactly.

"Yes," he said, with more spirit than usual: "that is the very thing for me. Can it be got, do you think? Am I fit for it?"

"Impetuous youth!" said Shirley. "I have certain friends who are railway directors, of whom I could easily ask so slight a favour. As for your fitness, I doubt whether at present you are fit for anything. But the duties of a railway-guard are; I apprehend, easy to learn; and if you really think the situation would do for you, I will at once make inquiries."

"I am sure of it," said Hugh. "Perpetual change of air and scene, fresh faces at every station, and a continual sense of responsibility, would do me all the good in the world. You see, Mr. Shirley, I am quite aware that I ought not to trouble myself, since I am far more fortunate than could well be anticipated ; but the mechanism of my brain has been shaken, so that my will cannot always control it. When I am quite myself, I am perhaps too hopeful of happy days to come : but there are moments when my mind works round and round the same point, and I cannot stop its movement by any effort. Hence I think that work which I could not shirk for an instant would be the very thing for me : so if you can in any way make a railway-guard of me, I shall be thankful."

Mr. Shirley, after thinking the matter over, was of the same opinion, and at once

it occurred to him that Sir Charles Wray, with whom he had become intimate on so very short an acquaintance, would have influence with the board of the Great Southern Railway. Though not a director, hating all such business, he was a very large shareholder, having had an early belief in the line, and invested in it with a special desire to make it serviceable to the neighbourhood wherever his estates lay. A word from him at head-quarters would place Hugh in the seat that he coveted—a guard's van. So Gabriel the indefatigable left Hugh at home, with strict orders to eat and drink and forget his cares.

“Go and help Mark in the garden, my lad : come in hungry and athirst, and make Fetch bring you steaks or chops and ale. Tire yourself out : eat, drink, smoke, sleep : you won't dream if you work hard. As the illustrious poet says :

‘Dreams fly the bed of him who tills the soil,
And perfect rest succeeds to thorough toil.’

I shall expect to find you as lively as a lark when I return to-morrow or the next day. I want to see you healthy, and nothing but hard work will do it.”

“If what you say is true,” said Roland, “when I exert myself I defy all evil. After all, men have had far worse things to bear than I. Frances and my aunt and you believe me innocent: and I sometimes think I ought to be thankful for my misfortune, since it has brought me to know one so kind and brave as you are, Mr. Shirley.”

“You pay me a very high tribute, my young friend, when you call me kind and brave. Those two words can only be applied to a man who loves all things good, and who fears nothing evil. I think I was born without much fear, thanks to a broad chest, where heart and lungs have ample

room : and I know I was born with plenty of love, seeing that I have never known the meaning of hatred. You cannot go through life without involuntary feelings of repulsion, based, I imagine, on an instinct which makes you equally turn from a loathsome reptile, a lying demagogue, a scoundrel emperor. But I don't hate even such poor creatures as these : let them wriggle through the low life God gave them with some inscrutable design. As the illustrious poet hath it :

‘To evil end the hideous reptile crawls,
Even when he dwells in stately royal halls.’

Now be kind and brave yourself : kind to your lady and your aunt and me, who are all anxious to see you free from your trouble ; and brave to meet the world, as becomes a man who suffers an undeserved wrong. Come, I am going to get a knapsack : walk with me to the edge of the common.”

Just as the road dips to the great beech-wood, the friends parted. Hugh went back more cheerily than usual, for he had a hope of work that would relieve his fretted brain, so he strode quickly across the turf, and went straight to Mark Chapman, to see if he could help him. He came at the right moment. Mark was cutting up some ash-trunks for future fuel—work that requires the use of saw and beetle—work at which two men can do a great deal more than twice as much as one. Hugh Roland set to, with both will and skill, having cut up many a tree in his time; and Mark respected him, as one stalwart labourer respects another; and when little Fetch, with her simple childish look, ran down with a can of sound home-brewed ale, both men were glad to sit on logs, and wipe the sweat from their brows, and strengthen themselves with the mighty malt of England. Fetch, in a

pink frock, her hands clasped behind her, looked on in sheer simple admiration, as they drank their ale in Titan-Teuton fashion. There were larks wild with joy in the upper air, and a soft breeze came cool from the south, and Hugh Roland felt to perfection the luxury of rest after toil.

"It's a fine weapon is the axe, mas'er," said Mark Chapman, all at once. And then he lifted up his voice and sang a country lay of the Sword and the Axe.

"The Zwoord, it cutteth poor mortals down,
Vor any lubber that wears a crown.
I do not valley the Zwoord one bit,
And they as uses it has no wit.

"But the zwinging Axe in the merry greenwood
Does our Winter vires a power o' good :
And I zays, may the timber never vail,
And I drinks to the Axe in the Zquire's old ale."

"A capital song," said Hugh, laughing :
work and refreshment and homely comradeship
awoke within him a healthy spirit.

Try it, any of you dyspeptic morbid folk, who are afflicted with too much gold, too many ideas, who have Tennyson, Swinburne, Darwin, Tyndall, Voysey, Colenso, Odger, Gladstone, on the brain. Go and find an English peasant of the right sort: a few are left, thank God, though we are trying to exterminate them: work with him, talk with him, feed with him. If pragmatic magazines and bewildering *conversazioni* have not quite destroyed your intellect, you will acknowledge that for once you have seen a *man*. Homer would have liked him better than any professor of them all.

Leaving Hugh to get all he could out of Gabriel Shirley's "handy man"—a man worthy of his master, who indeed had a faculty for finding out the characters of men—let us follow Mr. Shirley. He took the most direct way to Monckton Manor; but, when he arrived there, its master was not

at home. He had gone for a ride with his daughter. The servants, trained to courtesy to strangers, were specially courteous to Mr. Shirley, whom they recognised; he chose to await the general's arrival in the library, and was soon buried in a book. He had not read many pages when Sir Charles entered, with his daughter in her riding habit, flushed by exercise; and she at once said...

"O, papa, this is the gentleman I saw in the dark that night—when I was so startled, you know."

"I am sorry I startled you, Miss Wray," said the courtly Gabriel. "You did not startle me. So lovely a face beaming through the darkness was a vision of delight. If I had been forty years younger I should have dreamt about you. Sir Charles," went on the garrulous Gabriel, "I have taken you at your word; I want

you to give me some dinner and a bed.
You know the saying of the illustrious poet :

‘You ask some wayfarer to pass your door :
He comes ; he stays ; he proves himself a bore.’”

“You are welcome,” said the General,
“and the longer you stay the better pleased
I am. What say you, Cecilia?”

“O, I like to be flattered, papa, and
this gentleman seems to know the way. So
I’ll say no more, but run away and get
decent.”

As the charming child tripped off, holding
up her habit, Sir Charles looked fondly
after her. Then he turned to his guest :

“Mr. Shirley,” he said, “I have found
the value of a word spoken in season. What
you said to me the other day made me
think. Yours were wise words. To grieve
as I have grieved was an insult to God,
while it made me most miserable, and did
harm to my daughter. She could never

imagine why I was so cold to her. I have told her."

"Ah, you were right," said Shirley.

"Yes. I did not tell her you were my benefactor, because I should like to do that when you are present. But I told her that her great likeness to her mother often made me miserable, so that perhaps I was not as kind to her as I wished to be; and she said, 'Dear papa, you are always kind... but I should think you would like me to remind you of mamma in heaven.' And since that time my melancholy feeling has passed, for I see the justice of your argument, and believe that I shall meet again my late espoused saint."

"Common sense has some work to do in the world," said Gabriel Shirley. "I am the mouse that has gnawed through the net which confined the lion. Now shall I ask you a favour in return: 'Ask, and it shall

be given,' has been my motto through life."

"I give, before it is asked," said the General, "if it is within my power."

"I want to get a young fellow as a guard on the Great Southern Railway. He is a gentleman, but under a cloud just now, from no fault of his own; and I am desirous to find him active employment, for his health's safe. You will understand that he is perfectly free from blame; he has done nothing criminal, or even immoral; he has got into a labyrinth of awkward circumstances, from which with patience he will be triumphantly extricated. I did not even know him till he came to me by chance in his trouble."

"Enthusiastic Quixote," said Sir Charles, "I will be your Sancho. Though not Governor of Barataria myself, I know that potentate. The boy shall be a guard at once; if, from unfitness, or from being in

love, he causes many railway accidents, yours be the blame."

"Thanks," replied Gabriel Shirley. "The boy is in love, as he ought to be. The girl is in love with him. They will be married some day, I am certain; but it cannot be until that cloud I mentioned is cleared away."

"If it never passes?"

"It will—I have no fear. But if you care to know the story, I will tell it you all by-and-by, when your little girl is in bed."

"Little girl indeed!" cried a musical voice close to him. He looked up, and saw Cecilia in some fair light dress. She had entered silently. "So I am to be sent to bed while you tell Papa stories, Mr. Shirley! No, indeed; I like stories, and I hope yours are good ones. And I beg to say that I am mistress of the house till Papa

marries again, and don't mean to be sent to bed by anybody."

"She is too much for you, Shirley," said the General, laughing.

"What says the illustrious poet?—

'A lovely lady, wayward wit revealing,
May conquer me at once—I like the feeling.'

"So I may stay up, Mr. Shirley?" said the laughing girl. "How kind of you to tolerate such a baby! I won't be very troublesome, especially if you will tell me this mysterious story."

"I think I might venture, if you can keep a secret."

"Keep a secret! Of course I can, if it's my own; it's absurd to ask me to keep other people's. Why can't they keep them for themselves?"

"Some secrets are so serious, Miss Wray (may you never be troubled with such!), that they are too heavy a burden for one

person to bear, and he is only too fortunate if there's some one willing to lighten his trouble by sharing it. Now, I am doing this for a young friend of mine, whose position is a very strange one, and I am quite willing to tell you his story, if it will not sadden you too much."

"O," said Cecilia, "I was only in fun, Mr. Shirley. I am quite willing to go to bed, and let you tell Papa about this unfortunate gentleman. Still, you know, I don't object to a romantic tale, told as charmingly as you can tell it; and as to being saddened, I think I should like it. Life is almost too happy."

The General looked at his fair child with apprehensive glance. He feared for the continuance of that intense happiness. He knew that the souls sensitive to happiness are just as sensitive to misery. Now that his mood toward his daughter had changed,

he watched her with almost motherly tenderness, fearing he knew not what. His life had grown happier as he pondered Shirley's argument, but his anxious temperament found exercise in another way, and now he was in perpetual dread lest Cecilia should not be always quite happy.

It was a baseless dread, for Cecilia was embodied enjoyment. Her walk was a dance, and her speech was song. Everything in the world seemed to gladden her. The pretty face flushed at the song of a blackbird or the beauty of a rose; the hazel eyes brightened at the sight of a sunrise. Gabriel Shirley never forgot his first glimpse of her in the light of her handmaid's lantern. She came out of the darkness a lovely apparition, and smiled upon him with the half-frightened air of a timorous little wren that has come too near humanity. She might have been a nymph born of the twi-

light—a daughter of gloaming and glamour. Always about her was something aërial ; her life was joy.

That evening, after a dinner which had been brightened by pleasant talk, the General and his daughter and guest sat together in the library. On a round table stood an antique Etruscan lamp, and a flask of Venice glass, ruby-starred, holding a ruddy liquid, and small flowered glasses thereby. At a piano in a niche among the books Cecilia was sitting striking a few melodious notes at intervals, and sometimes murmuring a snatch of song. The General, a lover of music, had in his travels collected the airs of many wild races, with the words when obtainable. Cecilia had skimmed the cream of these, and woven them into fantasy and caprice of her own. She was singing now :

"They say the world is very sad
From the sun's hot noon to the round full moon :
While there's in it a lass and a lad
Sorrow's a thing will perish soon.

"I say the world is a world of joy,
With the sweet birds' tune in the summer swoon.
Make not of life a broken toy—
Beauty's a thing will perish soon."

"Cecilia," said her father; and the fair child came to him caressingly at once. "It was Mr. Shirley, my darling, who by a few wise words not long ago showed me I was making you and myself unhappy. Mourning for your dear mother, I was neglecting you."

"Don't say it, Papa!"

"Well, I will not: still you must thank Mr. Gabriel Shirley for awakening me from a melancholy and almost morose mood, by a simple statement of truth. I am very grateful to him, Cecilia: are not you?"

The beautiful girl crossed to Gabriel Shirley's chair, and kissed him. The old

gentleman compared himself silently to Tennyson's "Talking Oak," when Olivia kissed its too-sensitive rind. And he said, as Cecilia, having freely given her kiss of thanks, stood looking shyly at him :

"I'm a hundred times repaid, Sir Charles. Why should a chance word give me your friendship and your daughter's gratitude? I have already had infinite reward in the thought that you were cheered by what I said. Now, Miss Wray, may I tell you this wonderful secret?—unless you would prefer to go to bed. As the illustrious poet sayeth :

'A lesson sends the liveliest girl to sleep :
Tell her a tale, and wide awake she'll keep.'

"I *should* like to hear, if I may," said Cecilia, seating herself on a stool at her father's feet. "I will keep as many secrets as ever you like."

"Cecilia is like the famous female free-

mason in the old story," said Sir Charles. "She must be initiated now, whatsoever it costs her."

"Then I will address myself to Miss Cecilia," said Shirley. "Imagine, my dear young lady, a man just entering life suddenly accused of a murder he had not done, with evidence against him strong enough to satisfy a jury. Imagine him found guilty, though quite innocent, and spared from hanging because he is thought to be a maniac, though he is perfectly sane. Imagine his escaping from confinement among lunatics, and coming by chance to me, who had never seen him before or heard of him. Imagine my taking him in, and feeling as anxious about him as if he were my own son, and asking your father to find him a situation. Don't you think I am a deal madder than he is?"

"That is the skeleton of your story, is it?" said the General.

"All that need be told. The details are trivial. The boy—boy I call him, but I suppose he is seven or eight and twenty—could no more murder a man than you or I. He is the victim of circumstance and conspiracy. And O, my dear Miss Wray, you should see how his sweetheart believes in him. He had never said a word to her before that time : but I suppose he and she knew their own minds. The eyes have their language, I am told."

"Yours look very knowing sometimes, Mr. Shirley," said Cecilia. "But I'm sure if she had cared a bit about him before—though he and she might scarcely have known it—she would have found it out the instant he was in any trouble."

"These female children learn the whole art of love without the help of Ovid," said Sir Charles Wray. "This little Cecilia, whose acquaintance with young gentlemen

is circumscribed, lectures quite learnedly on the science of erotics. It seems, Mr. Shirley, that there are two reasons for making your friend a railway-guard : one, that he is either a madman or a murderer ; and the other, that a charming girl is in love with him. Such arguments are irresistible."

"If this were your serious reply, Sir Charles, I should bring evidence to show that the poor fellow is the victim of a series of mistakes. As for that part of your irony that is based on a charming girl's being in love with him, I hold my position very strong there. Nothing is keener than the instinct of a good girl. If the evidence against him had been far stronger, I should have believed him innocent on the ground of her belief. She could not love a man who could be a murderer."

"I should like to know that lady," said

Cecilia. "Papa, you will do what you can for Mr. Shirley's friend, will you not?"

"I would do anything Mr. Shirley asked without a moment's thought," said the General. "This unlucky fellow shall have his guard's van on the Great Southern; and I hope the whirligig of time will free him from it, and bring him here to dine with us and chat over his half-forgotten troubles. It is a most miserable position for a man; but if he keeps calm, and awaits events, it may result in a happy life in due time."

"That is what I tell him," said Shirley. "He is a fine fellow—daring, clever, lazy, untrained. Up to this time he has been just wasting his life, and I've a fancy this trouble may make a man of him. It often does. As the illustrious poet hath it:

'Joy is time's pander, Pleasure is time's thief :
But time's two conquerors are Toil and Grief.'

So I want to give him a chance, Sir Charles, and I rely on your help."

"It is accorded," said the General. "I am curious to know the upshot of this little intrigue of ours. You must keep me well informed about it. Couldn't you bring your man over here before he joins? He'll have precious little time after."

"He shall come," said Shirley. "He will be delighted and frightened."

Cecilia was at her piano singing :

 "Good night ! The world is still :
 No echo from the hill :
Without a sound the stars pass through the silent sky.
 The sweet leaves are not stirred
 By chirp of wakeful bird
 Or by late lover's word :
Amid a drowsy world alone awake am I.
 Ah, lady, sleeping sound
 While the great world goes round !
To be a vision of yours I would be glad to die.
 . Good night ! Good-bye !"

This was the last song. Gabriel Shirley had to start early the next morning, wishing to leave Hugh Roland not too long alone. But before he left Monckton Manor he saw

Cecilia again—looking in the early morning just like a flower that was born in the night. She came down to give him breakfast. She had a rose on her cheeks and a rose at her breast. She walked with him down to the front gate, and gave him a look of real thankfulness as they parted—and the stalwart old wayfarer went off homewards. She could not say what she wanted to say, but her look was enough. It told him that she knew what he had done for her father and herself.

CHAPTER XVII.

QUOT HOMINES.

"Was that your lover?" quoth Ralph the Earl
To his sister by the sea ;

"Why, a poor lame carl from a sinking boat
He surely seemed to me."

"Ah, wait a while," quoth the lady then,
"Till you see him when wild winds rise ;

"There was never a lover worth one true kiss
That came not in disguise."

The Last Viking.

BEHOLD Miss Hutchison in her favourite
diamond-casemented parlour at the
Hollies, with a tea-service in antique china
set on an old-fashioned polygonal japanned
table. With gold-rimmed spectacles to aid
the somewhat faded eyes of the climacteric

year, she reads, or thinks she reads, an inherited folio, the production of her great-grandfather, the Venerable Archdeacon Hutchison, entitled "The Church of England older than the Church of Rome." This treatise, in the fine large type and black ink unknown to these degenerate days, was dear to the old lady's heart; many times had she read it from beginning to end, without any clear idea of its meaning, but with the delightful feeling that it was perfectly orthodox, and was written by her grandfather the Archdeacon. Had it been in Latin, I think she would have read it quite as pertinaciously, and with even more enjoyment.

Frances is coming to tea, and to report her interview with Hugh. The old lady was a trifle timorous. She had lived so quiet a life that this sudden trouble shattered her nerves. She thought with horror of Hugh's being called first a murderer, and then a

madman. He had been a troublesome boy always; would put his dirty boots on her sofa, and liked beer better than ginger-wine, and Shakespeare and Byron (profane authors) better than the lucubrations of the Venerable Archdeacon. Still, with all his irregularities, how kind he was! There was always a rough gentleness about him, which the old lady recognized.

Frances came in presently—fresh as a lark, and just as gay. Her gaiety was not assumed, though there were times when she deemed it right to appear merrier than she really felt, for the dear old lady's sake. It was not so now. She was satisfied with the position of affairs. She believed Hugh Roland would prosper and clear himself. She had full confidence in Mr. Shirley. When she entered Miss Hutchison's quiet parlour, shaded by the hollies that lined the lawn outside, she freshened the atmosphere as if

she had been a cluster of fragrant hawthorn blossom. She had almost too vivid a vitality for old Miss Hutchison, withering away in her quiet rooms while Frances grew robust and strong in the gardens and meadows of Carey Farm.

Frances was a girl who made up her mind promptly, and stuck staunchly to her decision. It may here be observed that youthful readers of works of imagination are a little apt to judge the characters introduced from their own special point of view. The young lady who is sentimental is quite shocked by the proceedings of a heroine who has no sentiment at all, but a great deal of true feeling.

"O, I could not have done that!" she exclaims, and at once sets it down as unnatural, forgetting that the novelist's duty is to study character in all its varieties, and that she is not the only—nor perhaps even the most

interesting—variety of female character. Then the youthful critic, who is a prominent personage in modern journalism, since a man of letters of any real power will not waste his time on mere criticism, judges also from his own stand-point, “assumes the God,” and is charmingly severe on men of far higher mental stature than himself. If he finds anything he cannot understand he sets it down as folly. It seems rather a pity that criticism should fall into the hands of boys who have not learnt to write, or of superannuated persons who have tried to learn, and failed. I, who write this, have no quarrel with my critics, who have seldom ill-treated me, except from malignity or misapprehension—two mental diseases which are incurable. But I think the reading public would be thankful for a new critical journal of absolute impartiality. It should notice no book that was not worth

reading. Hence, of course, there would be no employment on it for the slashing writers who delight to cut up a book, especially if the author is a friend or a rival: hence also this journal would be a complete index and guide to the best literature of the day.

Satire has its value, doubtless, and I read Juvenal with delight; but that delight is increased by the satisfaction I feel that I do not live in such times as those of Juvenal. Satire, after all, is only the phosphoric gleam born of putrid matter. The true way to improve the people is not by laughing at vice and folly, but by setting a high ideal before them. The articles we see in certain journals, accusing English girls of immodesty, English matrons of inebriety, describing women of bad character, touching, in fact, on that outer verge of evil which we all know to exist, do harm to weak-minded readers, and do no good ex-

cept to the journals themselves. A well-known weekly paper divides itself into three heads: it is political, social, literary. It does its work brilliantly, yet badly. Would not the public welcome a paper of the same class, similarly divided in its arrangement, but with political articles entirely free from party, and with social essays that never glanced at the worst aspects of society, but always suggested higher developments, and with literary views that left worthless work to deserved oblivion, and introduced to the public the books they might wisely read? Such a journal would suit me: I believe it would suit London and England. The habit of looking at the worst side of everything is not naturally English.

The odour of pekoe souchong from thin china cups of a quaint *fleur-de-lys* pattern, struggled with the smell of honeysuckle.

Miss Hutchison had laid the Archdeacon aside, with her spectacles marking a wondrously difficult passage about Augustine of Canterbury, and served her young friend with tea and the thinnest possible brown bread and butter, and awaited her talk. Frances soon began.

“Hugh will be quite safe, Miss Hutchison. Mr. Shirley has taken care of him; and he is getting on capitally. I had some difficulty in making him take your money; and he is quite sure he won’t want any more; and I think the same. He went away in high spirits.”

“Poor boy!” sighed Mrs. Hutchison. “It is very hard upon him. I wonder when this terrible trial will be over. And I hoped to see him comfortably married, and perhaps be godmother to his first baby. O dear! With what he had, and with what I can leave him, he would have been able to

live a happy country life. It does seem hard."

"It is hard," said Frances. "But I believe most religiously that all will come right in time."

"And I shall be dead," replied Miss Hutchison. "I shall never live to see my poor boy righted. Frances, my dear, let me tell you what I have done—I have made a will, and left all I have in the world to you, and you must give it to him if he can ever take it. Will you? You will say yes, I know."

Frances did not take long to decide. She thought to herself,

"I believe in Hugh. I have made up my mind we love each other. I suppose he could not have a better trustee."

Still, in replying to Miss Hutchison, she could not help saying:

"If you make me your heiress, some one

else will want to marry me. What then, dear Miss Hutchison?"

"I am not afraid," quoth the clear-sighted old lady. Nor was there any need, for Frances, having decided, *first*, that she could love Hugh, and, *secondly*, that she did love Hugh, had come to the conclusion, as a necessary *thirdly*, that she would be true to him whatever might happen.

"I must run away early this afternoon, Miss Hutchison," she said. "Walter is coming home, and I want to be there to receive him."

"Where has he been so long?" asked the old lady.

"O, to several fairs and markets—and to London on business. I don't know where exactly."

"I hope he has not been too intimate with that wild set of people Captain Heath picked up with—members of Parliament and

flashy young women—all driving four horses I don't know where. It's a terrible place, that London, and I do hope your brother has kept out of temptation. Young men are so weak."

Frances thought that young women are not always strong, but she did not venture to say so. She took leave presently, and was home at Carey Farm before Walter's arrival.

When he did arrive, she was not satisfied with him. He seemed different from his usual self. Sometimes he was buoyant, sometimes morose. That first evening he went off to bed early, on the plea of fatigue, without giving his sister much information as to where he had been or what he had been doing. The next morning he went off over the farm, and then wandered into the village, and Frances saw nothing of him till dinner, when he did not seem in at all

an amiable humour. He was, in fact, very taciturn indeed, except when he grumbled at the soup being too peppery, or the steak overdone. Frances drew her own conclusions.

It was their custom, after dinner, to sit and chat over the wine. Frances liked just one glass of port: Walter could easily dispose of the rest of the bottle—not too much for a man who has been actively exercised in the open air all day. It was usually the pleasantest moment with this brother and sister: Walter was at his best after dinner, and Frances realized in him her esoteric dream of what he ought to be. A sister thinks more of her brother before she has a lover than afterwards.

Walter Carey was silent, I may say glum, for some time: then he suddenly said—

“You have had visitors, I hear, Frances.”

“Visitors!” she replied. “That old gen-

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those young women—all driving in
I don't know where. It's a terror
the ladies, and I do hope you
be kept out of temptation. You
are weak."

Frances thought that young women
were always strong, but she did not
so say so. She took leave from
her home at Carey Farm before
arrived.

When he did arrive, she was not
with him. He seemed different
and odd. Sometimes he was
sometimes more. That first evening
went off a little early, on the plea of
without giving his sister much to
know where he had been or what
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Carey was silent. I may say glum,
time: then he said—
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ors!" she replied.

quite sure, dear Walter, that, if you are intimate with the sort of people who disgrace our quiet village, you will surely suffer for it. All that was seen and heard of them was decisive against them. How can you endure such miserable wretches?"

"O, you girls tremble at trifles," said her brother.

"I tremble at nothing," she answered. "These people disgust me. I cannot understand how it is they do not disgust you. Fancy, after associating with ladies, feeling any interest in a fast young woman like the one who appeared in Avonside the other day! No—I don't understand it, Walter."

"Well, I don't understand you," he replied. "You talk all this nonsense about some mere acquaintances of mine, just to make me forget about your strange visitor—that's my belief."

"Walter," she said, in a clear sharp tone,

"I will not bear this. I have told you that I have seen Hugh Roland; what more do you want? I will see him again when and where I please, if it can be done without danger to him. What I have said in reference to yourself, was merely prompted by a fear that you were getting among people who would do you harm. You must judge for yourself whether I am right."

"Women are always right in their own opinion," said Walter Carey, and walked off to his own room rather abruptly.

Frances felt unhappy after this passage of arms with her brother; but she resolved to defend Hugh Roland to the very last . . . and she kept her resolve.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





